



# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**TWO DILEMMAS AND VICIOUS CYCLE OF  
CONFRONTATION ON THE CONTINUITY OF THE  
DIVISION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

by

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December 2011

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CONTINUITY OF THE DIVISION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The continuing division of the Korean Peninsula is the ongoing feature in inter-Korean relations, with repeating cycles of confrontations and conciliations. This thesis identifies contributing factors to the ongoing division from the intricately entangled security relations between the U.S., PRC, ROK and DPRK: rivalry and alliance. While struggling for security, they become either a security provider or a threat to other players. Each relational linkage provides an imperative security framework for the two Koreas, but these also have paradoxical security implications—“two dilemmas”—for inter-Korean reconciliation.

In the relations of two sets of rivalries—the U.S.–PRC and the ROK–DPRK, the Prisoner’s Dilemma explains how the rational player’s interest-seeking behavior produces deadlock, even though reconciliation provides better results. Also, in the relations of two sets of alliances, the U.S.–ROK and the PRC–DPRK, the alliance security dilemma explains how divergent interests and threat perceptions between allies work against any reconciliation policy. Moreover, the interaction of rivalry and alliance produces paradoxical security dynamics among the four players, and drives them into the vicious cycle of confrontations. In short, these intricately intertwined and dilemma-contained security relations induce significant conflict between the four players for either confrontational or conciliatory policies.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>IMPORTANCE AND PROBLEMS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>C.</b>	<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.	Influential Factors: International Level (External Factors).....	3
2.	Influential Factors: Internal Factors (including domestic factors) .....	5
<b>D.</b>	<b>HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>9</b>
1.	Presumption of the Thesis.....	9
2.	Relational Links Influencing the Inter-Korean Relations .....	10
3.	The Inter-Korean Relations in the Context of Rivalries and Alliances.....	12
<b>E.</b>	<b>THESIS OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>TWO RIVALRIES AND PRISONERS' DILEMMA IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>A.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>B.</b>	<b>THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA: THE DEADLOCK OF THE RAPPROCHEMENT POLICIES .....</b>	<b>18</b>
1.	General Concept of Game Theory and Prisoner's Dilemma.....	18
2.	Applicability of Prisoner's Dilemma Theory on the Korean Peninsula.....	19
3.	Solving the Prisoner's Dilemma Game: Pursuing a Cooperation Strategy.....	21
a.	<i>Changing the Characteristics of the Game.....</i>	<i>22</i>
b.	<i>Within the Prisoner's Strategy .....</i>	<i>22</i>
<b>C.</b>	<b>THE U.S.-CHINA RIVALRY AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA .....</b>	<b>23</b>
1.	Geo-Strategic Importance of the Korean Peninsula.....	23
a.	<i>The United States' Geo-Strategic Interest on the Korean Peninsula.....</i>	<i>24</i>
b.	<i>China's Geo-Strategic Interest on the Korean Peninsula.....</i>	<i>26</i>
2.	The U.S.-China Rivalry and the Korean Peninsula.....	27
3.	The Preferred Status of the Korean Peninsula .....	29
a.	<i>Preferences of the U.S. on the Inter-Korean Relations.....</i>	<i>29</i>
b.	<i>China's Preference on the Peninsula .....</i>	<i>31</i>
4.	Prisoner's Dilemma: Strategic Priorities of the U.S. and PRC .....	33
<b>D.</b>	<b>THE INTER-KOREAN RIVALRY AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA .....</b>	<b>36</b>
1.	The Dual Identity of the Inter-Korean Relations.....	37
a.	<i>Relations as an Independent State .....</i>	<i>37</i>
b.	<i>Relations as the Same Ethnic Nationality.....</i>	<i>38</i>

2.	The Enduring Rivalry and Security Dilemma in the Inter-Korean Relations.....	39
3.	Balance of Power and Strategic Behavior of Both Korea.....	40
a.	<i>The North's Superior Balance of Power During the Cold War in 1970s.....</i>	42
b.	<i>Reversed Balance of Power Since the Post-Cold War Era....</i>	45
4.	Prisoner's Dilemma of Inter-Korean Rivalry in the Post-Cold War Era .....	47
E.	CONCLUSION .....	51
III.	ALLIANCE SECURITY DILEMMA AND INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS...	53
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	53
B.	ALLIANCE AND SECURITY DILEMMA THEORY.....	54
1.	The Determinants of the Cohesion of the Alliance .....	54
2.	The Alliance Security Dilemma .....	56
3.	The Implication of Alliance Theories for the Inter-Korean Reconciliation .....	58
C.	THE ALLIANCE SECURITY DILEMMA IN THE U.S. –ROK ALLIANCE .....	60
1.	Threat Perception Changes between the U.S. and ROK.....	60
a.	<i>The U.S. Interests and Threat Perception.....</i>	61
b.	<i>The ROK's Interest and Threat Perception .....</i>	62
2.	Dynamics in the Abandonment and Entrapment in the Alliance.....	63
3.	Cases of Alliance Security Dilemma in the U.S.–ROK Alliance....	65
a.	<i>TMD vs. KMD .....</i>	65
b.	<i>USFK Strategic Flexibility.....</i>	66
4.	The Implication of the North Korean Nuclear Program for Sunshine Policy.....	67
a.	<i>Two Different Attitudes Toward North Korean Nuclear Program.....</i>	68
b.	<i>Two Different Attitudes Toward the Engagement Policy.....</i>	69
D.	THE ALLIANCE SECURITY DILEMMA IN THE PRC–DPRK ALLIANCE .....	71
1.	Brief of History of PRC-DPRK Alliance .....	71
2.	The PRC-DPRK Alliance and the Alliance Security Dilemma .....	73
a.	<i>The PRC-DPRK Threat Perception .....</i>	73
b.	<i>North Korean Nuclear Weapons Program .....</i>	75
E.	CONCLUSION .....	77
IV.	THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE FOUR PLAYERS AND THE CONTINUITY OF CONFLICT .....	79
A.	INTRODUCTION.....	79
B.	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ADVERSARY–ALLIANCE GAME AND THE ANTAGONISTIC DEPENDENCE .....	80
1.	Interdependence and Interconnectedness.....	80

2.	The Adversary and Alliance Game and the Inter-Korean Reconciliation .....	81
2.	The Antagonistic Interdependence.....	84
a.	<i>Antagonistic Dependence on Partner's Conflictual Relations</i> .....	84
b.	<i>Antagonistic Interdependence Between South and North Korea</i> .....	87
C.	THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF THE CONFRONTATION TRIGGERED BY NORTH KOREAN PROVOCATIONS.....	89
1.	The Linkages of the Vicious Cycle .....	89
2.	The Forces (Motivations) Turning the Vicious Cycle.....	91
a.	<i>The ROK's Antagonistic Dependence</i> .....	92
b.	<i>The U.S.'s Antagonistic Dependence</i> .....	93
c.	<i>The PRC's Antagonistic Dependence</i> .....	94
d.	<i>The DPRK's Antagonistic Dependence</i> .....	95
D.	CASE STUDY: VICIOUS CYCLE OF THE CONVENTIONAL MILITARY PROVOCATION (YENPYONG INCIDENT AND CHUNAN SINKING) .....	96
1.	Cases: Provocations but Limited Regional Impacts.....	96
2.	Cases: ROKS Cheonan Sinking and Bombardment of Yeonpyeong .....	99
a.	<i>The ROK Response</i> .....	100
b.	<i>The U.S. Commitment to the ROK</i> .....	102
c.	<i>The PRC Response</i> .....	104
d.	<i>The End of the Incident</i> .....	105
E.	CONCLUSION .....	106
VI.	CONCLUSION .....	109
A.	THE CONTINUITY OF THE DIVISION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA .....	109
1.	Prisoner's Dilemma and Alliance Security Dilemma .....	109
2.	The Paradoxical Equilibrium and the Vicious Cycle of Confrontation .....	111
B.	SOUTH KOREAN POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INTER-KOREAN RECONCILIATION.....	112
1.	Problem of South Korean Reconciliation Policy: Sunshine and Hardline .....	112
2.	Possible Policy Implications for the Inter-Korean Reconciliation .....	114
	LIST OF REFERENCES .....	117
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	127

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	Linkages of Relations and Influential Force .....	11
Figure 2.	Rivalries' Deadlock for Reunification .....	12
Figure 3.	Divergent Interests between Allies and Different Approach to Reunification.....	13
Figure 4.	The Dynamics of Strategic Calculations between Internal and External Players.....	14
Figure 5.	Per Capita GNP of North and South Korea, 1953–1990 .....	41
Figure 6.	Defense Spending, 1967–1997 .....	42
Figure 7.	Applied the Composite Dilemma (Case I) on the Four Players.....	83
Figure 8.	Antagonistic Dependence between the Four Players.....	86
Figure 9.	Vicious Cycle Triggered by Conventional Military Provocation .....	90
Figure 10.	Vicious Cycle Triggered by WMD Provocation .....	91
Figure 11.	Limited Chain Reaction during the Two Navy Battles.....	98
Figure 12.	Percentage of South Koreans' Concerns of Insecurity. ....	99
Figure 13.	Chain Reactions during the Two Incidents in 2010.....	100
Figure 14.	Public Opinion toward North Korea and the United States.....	103
Figure 15.	The Equilibrium Structure in the Korean Peninsula .....	111

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## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	Potential Sources of Influential Factors on the Inter-Korean engagement .....	7
Table 2.	Generalized Payoff Matrix for the Prisoner's Dilemma .....	20
Table 3.	Example Payoffs for the Typical Prisoner's Dilemma .....	21
Table 4.	The U.S. Trade with Asia and Europe (Figures for 1997 and 2007) .....	30
Table 5.	Prisoner's Dilemma between the U.S. and China on the Korean Peninsula....	34
Table 6.	U.S. Military Personnel Reductions, 1969–1971.....	43
Table 7.	Matrix for Boxed-Pig Game .....	48
Table 8.	Prisoner's Dilemma or Boxed-Pig Game between two Koreas.....	49
Table 9.	Correlation between Principal Determinants and the Fear of Abandonment and Entrapment .....	57
Table 10.	Correlations between Threat Perception, Interest and Alliance.....	58
Table 11.	Divergence Threat Perception Between the U.S. and ROK .....	64
Table 12.	Alliance Security Dilemma between the PRC and DPRK.....	74
Table 13.	Alliance Security Dilemma between the PRC and DPRK.....	76
Table 14.	The Composite Dilemma in a Multipolar System .....	82

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
JSA	Joint Security Area
KIC	Kaesong Industrial Complex
KMD	Korean Missile Defense
NLL	Northern Limit Line
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
ROK	Republic of Korea
TMD	Theater Missile Defense
USFK	United States Forces Korea
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

For more than sixty years, the Korea Peninsula has been divided into two halves in the context of the Cold War structure. Following the division of the peninsula after World War II, the two Koreas served as advance guards for the communist and free-world camps during the Cold War era. The Korean War severely separated the South and North, and each has maintained animosity toward its counterpart, struggling and competing for superiority of ideology and regime in the Korean Peninsula. Thus, the divided peninsula has always been a center of conflict in international relations and the recipient of great scrutiny from its strong neighbors. However, despite the internal and external tensions and confrontations in the peninsula, the peace and stability in the peninsula has been successfully managed without a major conflict triggering the second Korean War.

On the other hand, unlike Germany, the status of the two Koreas—allies of the U.S. and Soviet Union, respectively—has not been significantly changed, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Both Koreas are left as remnants of the Cold War, remaining technically at war without the peace agreement. Also, the diverse, extensive internal and external efforts for reconciliation and challenges to fix the North Korean problems seemingly have failed to result in further changes. The Korean Peninsula continuously “moved in a repeated cycle of reconciliation, improvement, confrontation and exacerbation,”<sup>1</sup> but could not generate the meaningful results.

This continued conflict and stability seems to be the ongoing feature of the Korean Peninsula. In this respect, the main purpose of this thesis is to identify and understand why and how the Korean Peninsula has maintained the stability and conflict with the simultaneous continuity of the division, and under what circumstances it will possibly modify the status quo and generate meaningful changes.

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<sup>1</sup> Tong Hui Ma, “Reunification of Korea is a Major Security Issue on the Korean Peninsula: The North Korean Perspective,” *Asia Paper* (October 2010), 6.

## **B. IMPORTANCE AND PROBLEMS**

No one can deny that inter-Korean relations are an internal matter, and should be addressed by the Koreans themselves. However, it is also an intricately intertwined regional security issue interconnected with both Koreas' aspirations for guaranteeing security and the strategic interests of external powers, especially the United States and China. Thus, the relationship of both Koreas has dynamics that cannot easily be separated from an intricately entangled interplay of extra and intra factors. In other words, the relationship between the two Koreas has long been not only a dependent variable of the international security environment, but also a bilaterally competitive, ideological struggle. Thus, without a comprehensive understanding of the complicated interplay of external and internal factors, drawing out a valid policy leading to fundamental changes between both Koreas is difficult.

Political decisions and approaches to inter-Korean relations, however, have often emphasized one side of those aspects. Even though the attempts and efforts at inter-Korean engagement inside and outside both countries seemed to produce some improvement, those often revealed limitations when confronted with other aspects and dimensions of the problems, the bilaterally wary attitudes, and external pressures applied by interests of neighboring states. For example, progressive governments, the Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun administrations, from the late-1990s to mid-2000s, ambitiously carried out "Sunshine Policy" for reconciliation with North Korea. However, despite some advancement in the relationship, the policy revealed the limitation when it faced paradoxical internal and external problems. Firstly, the policy could not prevent North Korea's nuclear program and provocations, despite the unconditional economic aid. Also, it brought concerns over estrangement of the U.S.-ROK relations while revealing divergent attitudes toward the DPRK nuclear program. Furthermore, the South failed to draw out China's full cooperation to influence the DPRK issues despite the raised bilateral relations along with economic interdependence.

As the case shows, in order to understand the failure and the deadlocked relations, and at least draw out valid policies, more insight is needed into the internal and external factors contributing to the maintenance of the status quo and the interaction of those

forces. In this respect, this thesis focuses on identifying the crucial internal and external factors and the dynamics contributing to the ongoing division.

### **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The primary focus of this research is identifying the dynamics and factors contributing to the continuity of the status quo. However, discriminating and classifying those factors are cumbersome because of the diverse layers of analysis, which are too intricately intertwined to explain individually. Also, there is an enormous amount of literature dealing with and containing causes and prospects of the inter-Korean relations. Thus, in order to identify these complex factors effectively, this thesis classifies these according to two main bodies of literature: external (beyond inter-Korean level) and internal factors (inter-Korean bilateral level). Due to its diverse perspectives and extensive discussions on these issues, this paper does not address all viewpoints found in the literature. It primarily focuses on influential factors researchers regard in their respective paper.

#### **1. Influential Factors: International Level (External Factors)**

Generally, it is believed that external factors influencing the Korean Peninsula are derived from attitudes and relations of major powers in Northeast Asia: the U.S., China, Japan, and Russia. Basically, these countries have interests in fundamental issues in the Korean Peninsula, such as “the nature of the North Korean regime, the desirable end state on the Korean Peninsula, and the roadmap and action plan for reaching that end state.”<sup>2</sup> In this respect, this paper narrows down diverse issues related to external factors into three main categories: the major powers’ (1) strategic interest, (2) mutual relationship and perception, (3) relationship with and security policy toward the two Koreas.

First of all, scholars point out the major powers’ respective national interest has them approach the two Koreas differently. Profoundly, divergent interests of those states collide with each other and make dissonance while pursuing their respective policies

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<sup>2</sup> Kang Choi and Minsung Kim, “An Assessment of the Security Environment and Challenges in the Post-Cheonan Era: A South Korean Perspective,” *International Journal of Korean Unification* 19, no. 2 (2010): 88–124.

toward the Korean Peninsula. The most frequently discussed main strategic interest is derived from the geopolitical location of the Korean Peninsula. Because of the location, the U.S. wishes to maintain its preponderance<sup>3</sup> and its military presence while keeping the Korean Peninsula under the nuclear umbrella.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, China does not want to lose North Korea, which serves as a strategic buffer against the U.S. influence.<sup>5</sup> If it has to, China will want to gain additional influence and reduce the number of U.S. military bases on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>6</sup> Japan prefers the retention of the status quo on the peninsula with a non-nuclear North.<sup>7</sup> If it should accept, Japan wants the unified Korea as a part of a U.S.-led alliance system.<sup>8</sup> Russia may take an active diplomatic approach toward the Korean Peninsula to seek to regain some of the influence.<sup>9</sup>

The second category is the significance of major powers' relationship, distribution of power, and international structure around the Korean Peninsula. Whenever there was tension or a détente mood among major powers in the region, both Koreas' strategic calculation were also pressured or changed accordingly. Thus, numerous research reports note the impact of the relations between the United States, the Soviet Union, and China during the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula. Also, since the end of the Cold War, U.S.-China relations, along with the China's ascent, have become the focal point influencing the Korean Peninsula.<sup>10</sup> According to the diverse and different prospects—pessimistic and optimistic—about U.S.-China relations, there are many prospects for the inter-Korean relations. Among explanations, the power transition theory predicts that the

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3 Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Min Lee, *Preparing for Korean Unification: Scenarios and Implications*, MR-1040-A, Rand Corporation, 1999, 6.

4 Derek J. Mitchell, "A Blueprint for U.S. Policy toward a Unified Korea," *The Washington Quarterly* 6, no 1 (Winter 2002–03), 132.

5 Charles L. Pritchard, "Korean Reunification: Implications for the United States and Northeast Asia," January 13, 2005, The Brookings Institution, 7.

6 Ibid.

7 Jounghwon Alexander Kim and Myungshin Hong, "The Koreas, Unification and the Great Powers," *Current History*, April 2006, 188.

8 Mitchell, *U.S. Policy toward Unified Korea*, 128.

9 Joseph P. Ferguson, "Russia's Role on the Korean Peninsula and Great Power Relations in Northeast Asia: Ramifications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance," *NBR Analysis* 14, no. 1 (2003), 4.

10 Fei-Ling Wang, "Stability with Uncertainties: U. S.-China Relations and the Korean Peninsula," *Pacific Focus* 20, issue 1 (March 2005): 93–134.



hegemonic competition between two superpowers will further separate the two Koreas. Besides, some of the literature touches on impacts of historical rivalry and nationalism between Sino and Japan, U.S.–Japan security alliance, and U.S. efforts to draw Korea into the trilateral alliance system.<sup>11</sup>

The third category is the bilateral relationship with and security policy toward the North and South. Firstly, both Koreas have respectively strong security ties with the United States and China. As a strong ally of South Korea, the U.S. stations military, guarantees security of ROK and deters North Korean military ambition, but the North perceives it as a major threat to their survival.<sup>12</sup> Also, China and North Korea have maintained a long security alliance. Even though the relationship is not as strong as the U.S.–ROK alliance, the China-DPRK alliance provides significant means for survival to DPRK and influences the status quo. Secondly, some researchers deal with the profound changes between U.S.–ROK and PRC-ROK relations: the convergence between China-ROK relations with economic interdependence and divergence between U.S.–ROK relations with democratization of the South. Also, there is much literature that points out the influence of security policies toward the North Korean problems, such as U.S. and Chinese policies toward the North Korean nuclear development and missile program, and divergent and convergent attitudes on its impact.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. Influential Factors: Internal Factors (Including Domestic Factors)**

A great deal of research examines repercussions on the inter-Korean engagement from both Koreas' bilateral and domestic attributes. On the one hand, those scholars point out the characteristics of the inter-Korean rivalry, relative national power, and the engagement policy. Most profoundly, inter-Korean relations are driven by the legitimacy

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11 Richard Weitz, "The Korean Pivot: Challenges and Opportunities from Evolving Chinese-Russian and U.S.-Japanese Security Ties," *Academic Paper Series* 1, no 3 (March 2007): 1–20.

12 Leon Sigal, *Disarming the Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 21.

13 Information on U.S. and China policies toward the North Korean nuclear program: Christopher P. Twomey, "China Policy Towards North Korea and its Implications for the United States: Balancing Competing Concerns," *Strategic Insights* V, issue 7 (September 2006), Wade I. Huntley, "North Korea Nuclear Crisis," *The Nonproliferation Review*, (Summer 2004): 81–115., Victor D. Cha and David C. Kang, "The Korea Crisis," *Foreign Policy* (May/June 2003).

and ideological competition since the Korean War.<sup>14</sup> Security concerns and experiences of the war have inspired both to build up a large military force and to keep a tight vigilance against each other. As one pillar of influential factors, the South Korean government has carried out proactive policies toward North Korea with its superior economic capability since 1990s. Depending on the inclination of government and its policies, Pyongyang differently responded with respect to Seoul's policy. Also, as democracy becomes more consolidated in South Korea, the popular sentiment and public opinion about North Korea is becoming a more important factor for the policy.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, numerous scholars find impediments for the inter-Korean engagement from the distinctive rigidity of North Korean regime. First of all, North Korea is the sole Stalinist country in the world equipped with the militarism (military first policy, *Songun*) and *Juche* ideology. Experts note *Juche* is an "ideological construct" of self-reliance and national identity.<sup>16</sup> Due to its religious characteristics, it may bring about "severe social conflict and psychological depression in the process of reunification."<sup>17</sup> Secondly, the Kim Jong-Il regime's concerns over the regime survival became a primary explanation of its behavior and policies. Behind these concerns, scholars estimate economic crisis, losing traditional allies, and falling behind the regime competition since the end of the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> Along with the regime survival, the nuclear development and the negotiations for denuclearization brought diverse and extensive controversies and influences on the region and inter-Korean relations. In addition, some

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14 Jonathan D. Pollack, "Korean Unification: Illusion or Aspiration?" *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* VIII, Issue 1 (Winter/Spring 2001): 77–90.

15 Myoung-Kyu Park and Philo Kim, "Inter-Korean Relations In Nuclear Politics," *Asian Perspective* 34, no.1 (2010): 111-135.

16 L Mitchell Lerner, "A failure of perception: Lyndon Johnson, North Korean ideology, and the Pueblo incident," *Diplomatic History* 25, no. 4 (October 1, 2001): 647.

17 Philo Kim, "An Analysis Of Religious Forms Of Juche Ideology In Comparison With Christianity," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 11, no. 1 (2002).

18 Han S. Park, "North Korean Perceptions of Self and Others: Implications for Policy," *Pacific Affairs* 73, no. 4 Special Issue: Korea in Flux (Winter 2000-2001):503–516.

articles argue the Kim Jong-II's health and the succession issue are important variables of North Korean behavior today.<sup>19</sup>

This section attempts to explore the existing literature dealing with probable factors influencing the continuity of the division. In general, the existing literature in this area is very diverse and quite extensive in scope. There seem to be a large amount of resources available, particularly in the field of the external and internal factors that influence both Korean relations. These factors are summed up in Table 1.

External Factors	Internal Factors	
	South Korea	North Korea
Major powers' Strategic interest Major Powers' Relationship - U.S.-China Rivalry - U.S.-ROK- DPRK relations - China-ROK-DPRK relations - Japan-ROK-DPRK relations Major powers' policy toward Koreas - Nuclear and Missile issues	The Legitimacy and Ideological Competition Military buildup (Nuclear Weapon) Relative National Power Ethnic and Nationalistic Identity (getting fade)	
	Domestic Factors	
	Policy toward North Korea - Sunshine policy - Hartline policy Popular Sentiment Public Opinion	Regime Rigidity - <i>Juche</i> ideology - Militarism Regime survival - Economic crisis - Losing traditional allies Kim Jong-II health and Succession

Table 1. Potential Sources of Influential Factors on the Inter-Korean engagement

In contrast, the overall weakness of the source material is that there are few research reports that measure the relative intensity of the influence of these factors, and systemically connects those to explain the interconnectedness of diverse aspects of the Korean issues. The majority of literature focuses primarily on analyzing individual factors and their influence on the peninsula. Even though this approach provides plausible explanations in the specific aspect, it does not help to understand the comprehensive feature of the continuity of division on the Korean Peninsula. The majority of the literature only emphasizes the importance of the interplay of the external

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19 Jinwook Choi, "Why is North Korea so Aggressive? Kim Jong-II's Illness and North Korea's Changing Governing Style," *Policy Forum Online* 09-062A (2009): 1-4.

and internal factors to supplement their respective theory, but they do not provide a specific explanation of it.<sup>20</sup>

Only a few research reports profess the importance of systemic approaches to the external and internal factors. Even prominent scholars—such as Victor Cha and Jonathan Pollack—have not focused on the interactions between internal-external and alliance-rivalry and its influence on the peninsula despite they generally recognizes the problem. For example, Cha explains the correlations of U.S.’s commitment (external) with the relations between South Korea and Japan (internal) in his one of articles.<sup>21</sup> Also, some Korean scholars suggest insightful methodologies. The most representative research focuses on “the division system theories” reflecting the uniqueness of the South-North relations. According to Nak-chung Paik, who is a left-wing scholar, the ruling classes of both Koreas have exploited the antagonism in the inter-Korean relations in order to consolidate their respective regime. Thus, if this kind of the governance structure is consolidated, overcoming the continuity of the Korean Peninsula becomes more difficult because of the interconnectedness with the domestic politics. From Paik’s perspective, the Korean reunification is only possible when civil powers overcome the internal contradictions of the ruling political system.<sup>22</sup> Chong-suk Lee and Myong-rim Park also emphasize the interconnectedness of the inter-Korean relations by adopting concepts of “antagonistic interdependence,” “mirror image effect” and “interfacial dynamics.” Despite the antagonistic attitudes toward each other, both Koreas’ authoritarian regimes intensified the dependence of their counterpart’s existence in order to supplement their lack of legitimacy.<sup>23</sup> Those division system theories have great significance in the sense of theorizing structural and systemic aspects of inter-Korean relations. However, those

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20 Choi and Kang.; Young Whan Kihl, “Security on the Korean Peninsula: Continuity and Change,” *Security Dialogue* 33, no. 1 (March 2002): 59–72.

21 Victor D. Cha, “Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia: The United States, Japan, and Korea,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 44, no. 2 (June 2000), 261–291.

22 Nak-chung Paik, “Toward a perception of the division system,” Paik, ed., *In The Path of Practice for Transforming the Division System* (Seoul, Changbi, 1994), 13–40.

23 Chong-suk Lee, “the Inter-Korean relations and Domestic Politics in the post-Cold War period,” Ki-duk Park, ed., *Ten years of the Korean Democracy: Changes and Continuities* (Seoul, Sejong Institute, 1998) ; Myung-rim Park, “The Structure and Changes in the Order of Division: the Interfacial Dynamics of Antagonism and Dependence, 1945~1995,” *National Strategy* 3, no.1 (1997): 41–79

theories still do not explain the relations of the internal and external factors. In this respect, this research will attempt to address gaps in the current literature, specifically with respect to verifying the interplay of external and internal factors contributing to the continuity of the division of the Korean Peninsula.

## **D. HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1. Presumption of the Thesis**

Identifying the influence and interplay of the external and internal factors is a challenging task. This is not only because of the relatively small number of prior research studies that have touched on the relevant issues, but also because it is difficult to measure working forces of these factors and its repercussions. In order to measure these influences effectively and simplify the dynamics of internal and external factors, this paper primarily adopts the neo-realist approach to explain the behavioral pattern of states. This is because even though various and diverse factors have influences on the inter-Korean relations, the main factors contributing to continuity of the division fundamentally rest on realpolitik issues, such as the security concern, distrust, and misperception. Also, the absence of the norms and multilateral institutions enabling regulation of stakeholders' behaviors make a realistic approach more dominant in the division issue, rather than liberal and constructive ideas. Thus, this approach helps to narrow down the analytical area to the strategic decision makers, who prioritize and pursue the national goal with respect to interests.

In this respect, the foundation of the thesis is based on the following core concepts of the realist theory. As Waltz argues, because of the “anarchical” characteristics of the international system, states seek power in order to ensure their survival.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, without self-help and pursuing power, states can lose their security and prosperity or become subservient to the will of others. Thus, states must prepare the

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24 Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 114.

various means against threats, especially by increasing their military strength or forming alliances. The basis this thesis follows is:<sup>25</sup>

1. States are the most important actors in world politics. Thus, world politics can be analyzed as if states were unitary rational actors seeking to maximize their expected utility. However, domestic groups influence the decision-making process.
2. States are instrumentally rational and motivated primarily by their national interests. Thus, states adopt instrumentally rational policies in their pursuit of power or security.
3. Calculations based on these necessities can reveal the policies that will best serve a state's interests.
4. No state can ever be certain another state will not use its offensive military capability.

With those premises, international politics surrounding the Korean Peninsula can be understood as the rational analysis of competing interests defined in terms of power. Also, the continuity of the division of the Korean Peninsula would be understood as by-products derived from competing interests.

## **2. Relational Links Influencing the Inter-Korean Relations**

Since the end of the Cold War, the international structure of East Asia has been restructured around the Sino–U.S. relations. Also, both countries are patrons who support their respective client: South and North Korea. With regard to the intensity of influence stemming from security and political ties, the U.S. and China are therefore the biggest external players affecting the inter-Korean reconciliation process. Even though other external powers, Russia and Japan, are also an important and influential variable, their current role is generally regarded as the subordinate position. Thus, this paper focuses on the PRC and the United States. Also, it refers the internal powers to South and North Korea.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 117.; John J. Mearsheimer “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19, no.3 (1994/95), 9–10.

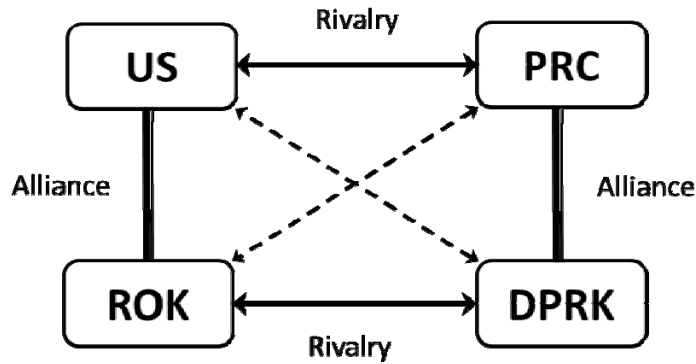


Figure 1. Linkages of Relations and Influential Force

If these four players' relations are represented schematically, the distribution of power and relational links can be illustrated as in Figure 1. Those links shows that an intimate and interdependent relationship of four countries whose influence creates a series of incentives and constraints for cooperative and conflictual behaviors. Often, "the interaction between two states and influences is influenced by" the presence of a third actor or party. In the relational linkages, interstate behavioral exchanges mutually influence not only to a targeted state but other states having links with it. In other words, external and internal influences are not an isolated issue, so all need to understand each relational link and its influences.

Figure 1 also presents the equilibrium of balance of power sustained by two distinctive realistic ideas: rivalry and alliance. Those four states struggle for their security and survival, and it drives other players into either a security provider or a threat. Also, each state's perceived strategic gains and losses often reinforce each other in consolidating the persistence of balance of power between those states.<sup>26</sup> This configuration and relational links of four countries shows that the interdependence and dynamics of the entangled rivals and allies are very influential factors contributing to the continuity of the division of the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, in order to understand the

<sup>26</sup>Conception of interdependence casual force refers to: Yu-Shan Wu, "Exploring Dual Triangles: The Development of Taipei-Washington-Beijing Relations," *Issues and Studies* 32, no. 10 (October 1996), 26–52.

continued division problem, one needs to understand how (1) rivalry and (2) alliance and (3) the interplay of alliances and rivalries influence the inter-Korea reconciliation process.

### 3. The Inter-Korean Relations in the Context of Rivalries and Alliances

Ironically, in the relations of rivalries and alliances, there are dilemmatic issues: Prisoners' Dilemma in rivalries and Alliance Security Dilemma for allies. These dilemmatic issues produce the paradoxical problems for the reconciliation. Therefore, this paper explores rivalries and alliances along with those theories to verify their influence on the reconciliation process. In order to examine those influences effectively, this thesis conveniently divides contents into three main sections: two rivalries, two alliances and the interplay of rivalries and alliance.

First of all, it investigates the U.S.-China and ROK-DPRK rivalries and their influence on inter-Korean relations and reconciliation. Both rivalries have been doing adversary games with respect to the relative gains and losses. This delicate security dilemma produces different priorities and interests approaching the Korean reunification (as shown in Figure 2.) Thus, in order to figure out the deadlock for the reunification in both rivalries, this thesis uses Prisoner's Dilemma game theory as a main tool. For the rivalry relations, the Prisoner's Dilemma theory helps to explain how a rational player's behaviors seeking national interest produce deadlock even though there is a better result when they cooperate. According to the theory, it is possible to understand the deadlock by defining four players' national interest and strategy related to the Korean Peninsula.

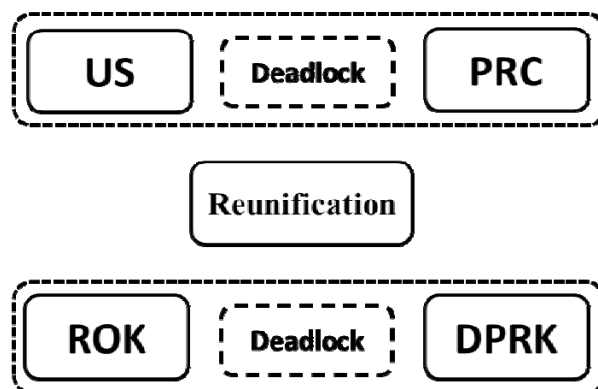


Figure 2. Rivalries' Deadlock for Reunification



Secondly, this thesis also focuses on the divergent approaches from the allies. The security environmental changes in the post-Cold War era, both allies within the U.S.-ROK and PRC-DPRK have divergent and convergent interests on the reunification, and it makes it difficult to maintain consistent approaches toward the reunification issues (as shown Figure 3). In order to examine the allies' wedged interests toward the peninsula and its influence, this paper adopts "alliance security dilemma" theory, which is suggested by Snyder.<sup>27</sup> The alliance dilemma theory explains that when allies have divergent interest and thereat perception, they have two different types of fears of "entrapment and abandonment." According to the theory, allies tend to focus alliance more on their respective security priority whereas they are reluctant to take undesired costs by being entrapped in allies' security affairs. This concept of security dilemma is a useful tool to understand the different attitudes of U.S.-ROK toward the Sunshine policy and the North Korean nuclear program which their security perspective were significantly diverged.

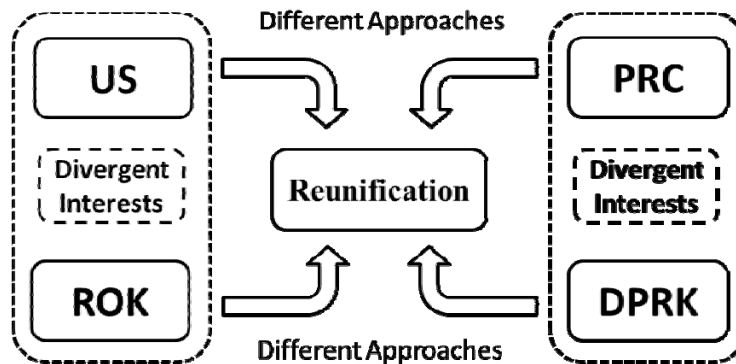


Figure 3. Divergent Interests between Allies and Different Approach to Reunification

Finally, and most importantly, this thesis explains the four players' paradoxical relations when it combines those two theories into the Korean reunification issues. As noted above, each of external and internal powers has been involved in respective rivalry and alliance with respect to national interests, thus both security relations fundamentally drives to choose the security strategies. However, in the process of executing strategy, it

<sup>27</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 5, (July 1984): 461–495.

not only influences the relationship of the targeted player but also becomes a basis of the other players' strategic calculation. Indeed, the dynamics of the strategic calculations are illustrated as Figure 4.

In these complicated strategic relations, it can find that the four players are closed interconnected with the adversary and alliance at the same time. Thus, it has produces distinctive security dynamics between the four players. For example, a North Korean provocation not only has negative impacts on the inter-Korean reconciliation process, but also helps the U.S.–ROK alliance to be concretely united and for China to use it as an opportunity to exert its influence on the region. In other words, to some extent, those countries have dependence on the North Korean provocation in their own terms, and it consolidates the current status quo and the persistence of the continuity of the Korean Peninsula. In this regard, this thesis needs to investigate whether those dependences produce vicious cycles of tensions and prevent the reconciliation process from the inter-Korean relations. In order to explain such paradoxical issues, this paper uses “alliance-adversary game” which suggest the interconnectedness between the two sets of the alliances and rivalries and “antagonistic dependence theory” that explains the dependence of the four players on the tension and conflictual relations.

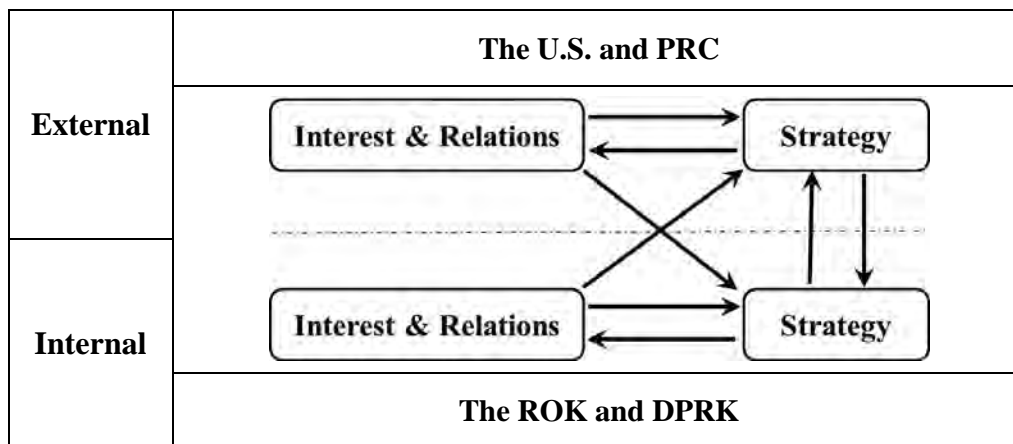


Figure 4. The Dynamics of Strategic Calculations between Internal and External Players

In the following chapters, this paper thoroughly explores national interests, strategies, dynamics and related theories of four players to explain the continuity of the division in the Korean Peninsula, but it would need enormous and broad data and

explanations. In order to avoid such a problem, this paper mainly focuses on the post-Cold War period, besides explaining the historical background, and limits discussions strictly to the inter-Korean-oriented issues specifically supporting the ideas, such as different approaches in the Sunshine policy and Nuclear Program. In addition, for the purpose of the effective explanations of the three dilemmatic issues suggested above, each chapter succinctly explains related theories and their relevant concept on the issue, then addresses the problems, and interprets those with the theories.

## **E. THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis contains five chapters. This first chapter briefly explained the research question and importance, and introduced hypothesis and methodology of the case study to examine the intensity of influence of the external and internal factors. Chapter II suggests how the problematic rivalries prevent the reconciliation from happening by applying the Prisoner's Dilemma theory. After introducing the core concept of the theory, this chapter provides an overview of the strategic importance of the Korean Peninsula for strong powers in the post-Cold War era, and the unique relations between the South and North, to illustrate the profound difference the four players' interest. Then, it addresses the deadlock in the inter-Korean relation in terms of explanation of the Prisoner's Dilemma. Chapter III briefly introduces the main conception alliance theories and the Alliance Security Dilemma theory, and shows how it applies to the Korean Peninsula situation. To support the idea, this chapter also provides an overview of the U.S.-ROK and PRC-DPRK alliance and security environment changes in the post-Cold War era. Then, it addresses the implication of the alliance security dilemmas on the inter-Korean relations. As noted above, the main purpose of Chapter IV is to discuss the paradoxical relations of those four players. In order to explain these dilemmatic relations, this chapter briefly introduces "the alliance and adversary game theory" and the antagonistic interdependence theory. Then, it adopts two recent and most notable incidents, the "ROKS Cheonan sinking" and the "Bombardment of Yeonpyeong," in order to support the previous theories and show the paradoxical relations between the four players. As the conclusion sector, Chapter V analyzes those data collected from previous chapters to explain the interplay of the external and internal factors. Also, it briefly shows that the

Korean Peninsula is intricately involved in the vicious cycle of dilemmas. Based on such findings, it suggests and traces the implications of these findings for U.S. and ROK policy options.

## **II. TWO RIVALRIES AND PRISONERS' DILEMMA IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Since the division of the Korean Peninsula, South and North Korea have maintained rivalry relations in the context of the Cold War structure. The two Koreas took part in the two different regional groups of states: one in the Maritime Trilateral powers and the other in the Continental Trilateral powers.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, as these two group's confrontation deepened, the conflict and enmity between the two Koreas were intensified. While these two sets of rivalries have facilitated conflicts and confrontations, the stability of the Korean Peninsula has been maintained in the context of regional balance of power,<sup>29</sup> but animosity and distrust were further consolidated. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S.-U.S.S.R bipolar structure was eventually replaced by the U.S.-PRC rivalry. In this newly emerged regional structure, the two Koreas still have taken an important strategic role counterbalancing the adversary group. Then, the inter-Korean rivalry becomes closely connected to the regional confrontation led by the U.S. and PRC. Therefore, the two sets of rivalries should be addressed whether they can reach consensus for inter-Korean reconciliation.

On the other hand, the four players not only share security problems inflicting confrontations but also motivational factors providing greater benefits toward each other when they are cooperating. (i.e. cooperation for North Korean WMD between the U.S.-PRC) Therefore, in this chapter, this paper finds the possibility of conciliation and cooperation between two sets of rivalries—the U.S-PRC and the ROK-DPRK—for the inter-Korean reconciliation, and which factors prevents rivalries from cooperating for common interest. In order to understand how the deadlock occurs between the two rivalries, this paper employs the Prisoner's Dilemmas theory. For the effective explanation, this chapter introduces the applicability of the Prisoner's Dilemma theory

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<sup>28</sup> G. John Ikenberry, "The Political Foundation of American Relations with East Asia," in *The United States and Northeast Asia : Debates, Issues, and New Order*, eds. G. John Ikenberry and Chung-in Moon (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 33–34.

<sup>29</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

briefly. Then, it investigates two sets of the rivalries' strategic interests and concerns on the Korean peninsula as well as optimal condition for both sides. After that, in the last part, it applies the prisoner's dilemma theory to the two sets of rivalries to examine the possibility of changes of the status of the peninsula and finds the reason for the deadlock between rivalries.

## **B. THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA: THE DEADLOCK OF THE RAPPROCHEMENT POLICIES**

### **1. General Concept of Game Theory and Prisoner's Dilemma**

Game theory is the study of the interactive decision-making behavior in which strategic interactions among rational agents "produce outcomes with respect to the preferences of those agents, where the outcomes in question might have been intended by none of the agents."<sup>30</sup> As a pioneer, John Von Neumann introduced first the mathematical game theory in the article "Theory of Parlor Games," which proves the existence of the optimal strategy in the two-person zero-sum game.<sup>31</sup> However, the initial efforts had limitations due to its applicability limited only under certain and special conditions. In reality, the number of interacting agents is often more than two, and non-zero-sum is more commonly found, which is unclear about the winner or loser. During 1950s, John Nash further refined the theory by successfully explaining the existence of sets of optimal strategies, called "Nash equilibria," that players will have at least one if the strategies of the other players remain unchanged in the non-zero-sum game having more than two agents.<sup>32</sup>

The main insight of game theory is the understanding "strategic interactions." Decision makers do not make decisions independently of one another; rather, they make choices based upon their anticipation of what other actors will likely do.<sup>33</sup> In the game

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<sup>30</sup> "Game Theory," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2011 Edition)*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/game-theory/> (accessed October 10, 2011).

<sup>31</sup> Dresher, Melvin, *The Mathematics of Games of Strategy: Theory and Applications*, (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1981).

<sup>32</sup> Washburn, Alan R., *Notes on Game Theory*, Monterey, (CA: Naval Postgraduate School, January 2000), 26.

<sup>33</sup> Ngaire Woods, *Explaining International Relations since 1945* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 16.

theory, the most important standard of criterion of prediction is the player's rationality in trying to do the best they can in order to maximize their return. However, often other player's actions are not entirely predictable because of the uncertainties, such as players' mistakes and dispersed or false information.<sup>34</sup> Thus, decision makers interact with opposing actors, choosing strategies to achieve the objective while taking into consideration the opposition's strategies based on rationality and uncertainties as well.<sup>35</sup>

Also, the main characteristics of the multi-person game derive from the interdependence that "any player in the game is affected by what others do; and in turn, that player's actions affect the others." Thus, "the outcome depends on everyone's decisions; no one individual has full control over what happens."<sup>36</sup> This dependence often generates unintended outcomes when the each player's behavior is to maximize an individual interest. Thus, the optimal decision should be understood in the context of the interactive multi-person game and its final outcome. The important thing is that even in the fiercest competition, there always will be some common interests in cooperation when all participants agree in increasing the total amount of gains. Therefore, players are often faced with contradictory motives: the desire of growing a pie and the desire of having the largest share of it. Often, the player's attempts to increase their own shares have a side effect of decreasing the cooperation to increase the benefits. Thus, among interacting agents, a tension always exists between seeking the total benefits, as opposed to merely seeking a large share of them.<sup>37</sup>

## **2. Applicability of Prisoner's Dilemma Theory on the Korean Peninsula**

In international relations, deadlock often occurs when two players fail to cooperate, even when there are strong incentives, because of insecurity, competition and

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<sup>34</sup> Philip D Straffin, *Game Theory and Strategy*, (Washington D.C.: The Mathematical Association of America, 1993), 7.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>37</sup> Jack Donnelly and ", *Realism and International Relations [Electronic Resource]* (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 21.

conflict.<sup>38</sup> The prisoner's dilemma is the simplest game theory model enabling one to analyze such deadlock generated by "the political distance between desire and achievement."<sup>39</sup> The theory provides an analytical tool that explains the important dilemma—states' competition for their interests produces the mutually unintended consequences even when there is more preferable outcome for both sides. In this respect, the game theory is helpful to analyze the continuity of the division entangled in the confrontations of both rivalries.

The prisoner's dilemma theory is a hypothetical two-player nonzero-sum, non-cooperative game in which the rational actors are seeking respective interests without communication prior to starting the game.<sup>40</sup> In the theory, each actor has two available strategies, defection and cooperation, thus it has the four possible outcomes in such as the two-by-two games summarized in Table 2.

<b>Player 1</b>	<b>Player 2</b>		
		<b>Cooperation (C)</b>	<b>Defection (D)</b>
	<b>Cooperation (C)</b>	<b>R, R</b>	<b>S, T</b>
	<b>Defection (D)</b>	<b>T, S</b>	<b>P, P</b>

R="Reward" (CC), T="Temptation" (DC), S="Sucker" (CD), P="Penalty" (DD)

$$T(DC) > R(CC) > P(DD) > S(CD)$$

Table 2. Generalized Payoff Matrix for the Prisoner's Dilemma

In the table, the first element of an entry in the table determines the payoff to Player 1, and the second entry determines the payoff to Player 2. In the game, the preference ordering of both players is always  $T > R > P > S$  with respect to the size of the benefits. The preference ordering creates the condition that the "Defection (T)" strategy always dominates the "Cooperation (R)" strategy for rational both players while seeking

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>40</sup> R. Duncan Luce and Howard Raiffa, *Games and Decisions*, (New York: John Wiley, 1957).



maximum interest.<sup>41</sup> A typical pay-off structure of the Prisoner's Dilemma looks like this:

Player 1	Player 2		
		C	D
	C	3, 3	0, 5
	D	5, 0	1, 1

Table 3. Example Payoffs for the Typical Prisoner's Dilemma<sup>42</sup>

In this game, the dilemma appears when both players should choose either one of the strategies, cooperate or defect. As illustrated in Table 3 (C, C), *mutual cooperation*, supplies a higher payoff for both players than (D, D), *mutual defection*. Thus, it looks like the more reasonable strategic choices for both of them. However, the problem is that it is the second-best outcome for them,  $T > R$ ; thus, each side would be tempted to choose defection in hopes of obtaining a larger individual payoff. Also, cooperation has the risk of getting suckered by the counterpart's defection. In the relations in which mutual *distrust* or *greedy desire* exists, rational players will choose to defect even if they understand that cooperation brings more benefits. Thus, mutual defection is always the clear solution and the only strategically sensible outcome in the prisoner's dilemma. However, it will always leave both players in a suboptimal position.

### 3. Solving the Prisoner's Dilemma Game: Pursuing a Cooperation Strategy

In this dilemmatic situation, without enforcer or other mechanisms that allow actors to risk cooperating, and without a procedure for achievement on how to divide the benefits of cooperation, both players may remain locked in a cycle, even a descending spiral, of competition. In this respect, generally there are two main categorizes for the solution.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

**a. *Changing the Characteristics of the Game***

First of all, the fundamental solution for the cooperation is changing the game's characteristics itself. The most important thing is to eliminate conditions creating the Prisoners Dilemma between players: higher benefit of defection than that of cooperation, absence of communication, and absence of enforcement punishing a defector. Thus, the following measures increase the chances of achieving the mutual cooperation (R):

(1) Increasing incentives to cooperate by increasing the payoffs of mutual cooperation (R) or decreasing the costs the actor by reducing the risk of being suckered (S)

(2) Decreases the incentives for defecting by decreasing the gains of taking advantage of the other (T) and/or increasing the costs of mutual noncooperation (P)

(3) Making a mutual cooperation pact and establishing some mechanism to enforce it <sup>43</sup>

Those changes in the structure of interaction or the preferences of the actors might evade the dilemma and make it less severe.

**b. *Within the Prisoner's Strategy***

The other important thing to overcome the Prisoner's Dilemma is winning in the game. According to Thomas Oatley, if the following three conditions are met, cooperation in a prisoner's dilemma can emerge.<sup>44</sup> First, if the same actors play the Prisoner's Dilemma game repeatedly over time rather than a single choice, cooperation possibly emerges due to its continuity. In this iterated Prisoner's Dilemma, repeated interaction makes players more responsible because actors must consider the consequences of defection in preceding turns of the game. Second, the actors must regard the future outcome or do not value future payoffs; there is more possibility of running the risk of reverting to a single prisoner's dilemma game, which makes cooperation much

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, Issue 2 (January 1978), 179–183.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Oatley, *International Political Economy: Interests and Institutions in the Global Economy*, (New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2008).

less rational. Finally, adopting the “tit-for-tat” strategy within the iterated game produces larger payoff than other strategies. When one player employs a tit-for-tat strategy, it will be a useful measure enforcing continued cooperation in each round of the game. Therefore in this game, cooperation can emerge from self-interested actors even in the Prisoners Dilemma situation if they expect to interact indefinitely. A typical tit-for-tat strategy is that of cooperating on its first move and then making the same choice thereafter that its opponent did on the previous move. Thus, if the game lasts long enough for retaliation, it can counteract the temptation to pursue an opposition player’s defection strategy by employing reciprocity. The essential factor in this argument is whether players emphasize the future gains possible from cooperating.

### **C. THE U.S.-CHINA RIVALRY AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

#### **1. Geo-Strategic Importance of the Korean Peninsula**

In international relations, “geography or geopolitics has long been the point of departure for studies of foreign policy or world politics.”<sup>45</sup> For more than a century, the location of the Korean Peninsula has become a hot spot of a balance of power between strong powers competing for that control. The Korean Peninsula is located in the geo-strategically and geopolitically unique position in Northeast Asia. It is the epicenter where the interests of four major powers intersect—the United States, the People's Republic of China, Russia, and Japan—to meet in one strategic area and the buffer zone where the big powers are prevented from direct collision. The unique strategic location sets it as both a threat and an opportunity for the four strong powers, which will determine a great deal of the balance of power in Northeast Asia. “The control of Korea by any one of the neighboring countries would constitute a serious security threat to the remaining powers.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, any shifts of power in the region have greatly affected the status and policies of the neighboring powers. For these reasons, Korea has been in the

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<sup>45</sup> Robert A. Pastor, “The Great Powers in the Twentieth Century: From Dawn to Dusk,” in Robert A. Pastor, ed., *A Century's Journey: How the Great Powers Shape the World*, (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 27.

<sup>46</sup> Young Whan Kihl, “Security on the Korean Peninsula: Continuity and Change,” *Security Dialogue* 33, no.1 (March, 2002), 63.

cockpit of nations that have sought regional dominance or the springboard to advance toward continents or oceans for centuries. Thus, the historically popular term in international relations for describing the status of Korea is “shrimp among whales.” While these countries seek to maximize their interests and reduce threats, its dynamics produces certain pattern of behaviors between these countries.

Thus, the strategic importance of the Korean Peninsula largely depends on how much the strong powers value Korea’s importance as a pawn to balance or check the other powers. Thus, the intensity of the attention and intervention varies according to the good and bad relations between external powers, currently the U.S. and PRC. Since the Korean War, bloody struggles against each other for both sides, U.S.-China relations appear to closely relate to the issues of the Korean Peninsula.

*a. The United States’ Geo-Strategic Interest on the Korean Peninsula*

Indeed, the strategic importance of the Korean Peninsula was controversial before the Korean War. Korea “never loomed particularly large in the political or strategic calculations”<sup>47</sup> for U.S. strategists because the onetime Hermit Kingdom was a small, poor, and backward country that had little or no economic, strategic, or political importance. Korea was little more than a pawn on the chessboard in those years, whereas strategists primarily focused on the security of Europe. The second expectation of the Soviets was that they would not engage in obvious aggression because it would result in a total war with the United States.<sup>48</sup> Also, U.S. strategists believed the further expansion of the Soviet Union could be neutralized by the superior American air and sea power; thus, generally Korea’s importance would not be raised until the emergence of new variables. Based on such strategic calculation, U.S. strategists withdrew troops from South Korea and excluded Korea from the strategic Asian Defense Perimeter outlined by Secretary of State Acheson.

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<sup>47</sup> Professor John Edward Wilz, in comments before the U.S. Air Force Academy, 1992.

<sup>48</sup> Alexander George, “American Policy-Making and the North Korean Aggression,” *World Politics* 7, no. 2 (January 1955).

However, the two factors raised the strategic importance of the Korean Peninsula. First of all, after losing China to the hands of communists, Japan increasingly appeared as the critical counterbalance to the Soviet Union and China in the region. In order to prevent the communist camp's further expansion and protect Japan—the U.S.'s the main ally in the region, South Korea became the front line and buffer zone.<sup>49</sup> Also, the North Korean attack on the South was the testing board that examines the commitments of the United States toward the Soviet Union and the other allies. Even though the Truman administration was concerned that intervention in Korea would escalate to a general war, their main concern was that communist aggression, if left unchecked, would trigger a chain reaction, inducing further communist aggression elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> This demonstrates that the Korean Peninsula's strategic value is determined by the external powers' relations and strategic environment.

Since the Korean War, the U.S. foreign policy toward East Asia has been based on keeping America's position as a preponderant status quo power in the region.<sup>51</sup> The U.S. has wanted to maintain continuity rather than change, and its security and economic strategies toward the region reflected this reality.<sup>52</sup> To the U.S., South Korea was a critical forward base in Northeast Asia for containing the Soviet Union and China during the Cold War. Also, its presence offers an important base as a foothold from which to promote, expand and maintain the U.S.'s preponderance and its influence over the region. In this context, the presence of U.S. troops on the peninsula is regarded as “one of the linchpins in Washington's power structure design for the region.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, what is emphasized is a firm American commitment to the maintenance of peace and stability on the peninsula and the regional status quo to secure its influence. In this regard, the interests of the United States on the Korean Peninsula are threefold: prevention of

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<sup>49</sup> Young C. Kim, *Major Power and Korea*, (Silver Spring, MD: Research Institute on Korean Affairs, 1973), 151–154.

<sup>50</sup> David Rees, *Korea: The Limited War* (New York: St Martin's, 1964).

<sup>51</sup> Ikenberry, *The Political Foundation of American Relations with East Asia*, 33–34

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Shiping Tang, “Neutral Reunified Korea: A Chinese View,” *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* XIII, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1999), 3.

armed unification by North Korea, an economically and politically stable South Korea, and the protection of Japanese security.

***b. China's Geo-Strategic Interest on the Korean Peninsula***

The PRC also has an inherent geo-strategic interest in Korea because of its long common border with Korea. "Although never publicly articulated, China tends to view the Korean Peninsula as its natural sphere of influence."<sup>54</sup> Also, historically, China has deeply intervened and interacted in the every aspect of Korean society. Thus, China's influence is inherently stronger than other countries. However, the most significant of China's interests lay on the peninsula derived from the part of the strategic competition with other strong powers. Since the end of the nineteenth century, as competition among strong powers became fiercer, the Korean Peninsula emerged as a significant buffer zone.

During the Cold War, China and the Soviet Union considered the geological location of the Korean Peninsula as "Finland, Poland, and Rumania in Europe, a springboard" in East Asia for the attack from Japan and the United States.<sup>55</sup> Thus, Beijing has always considered Korea to be the "lips to China's teeth," and it became the main justification of the "War to Resist America and Assist Korea" during the Korean War in order to prevent the presence of U.S. forces on China's doorstep.<sup>56</sup> After the war, the strategic value of Korean Peninsula remained as a safeguard against U.S. forces stationed in South Korea. Furthermore, this main strategic importance makes China to continuously support Pyongyang's regime to survive.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to that, the Korean Peninsula is a pawn to balance and check against the United States and Soviet Union for China. First of all, North Korea is an

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<sup>54</sup> David Shambaugh, "China and the Korean Peninsula: Playing for the Long Term," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2003), 50.

<sup>55</sup> Chang-il Ohn, "The Causes of the Korean War, 1950-1953," *International Journal of Korean Studies* XIV, no. 2 (Fall 2010), 24.; John J. Tkacik, Jr., "How the PLA Sees North Korea," Andrew Scobell and Larry M. Wortzel, eds., *Shaping China's Security Environment: The Role of the People's Liberation Army* (SSI: Carlisle, 2006), 149.

<sup>56</sup> Angus Ward, "The Mukden Affair," *American Foreign Service Journal*, (February 1950), 15.

<sup>57</sup> Denny Roy, "China and the Korean Peninsula: Beijing's Pyongyang Problem and Seoul Hope," *Asia-Pacific Security Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 2004), 1-4.

important leverage against the United States over Taiwan issues. Because of its existence on the buffer zone, North Korea allows China to focus military presence along the Taiwan Straits instead of on the border with Korea. Additionally, U.S. forces in Japan and the South Korea are forced to divide their attention between the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan, instead of focusing purely on Taiwan issues.<sup>58</sup> Also, China exploited North Korea as a pawn to check against the Soviet Union during the Sino-Soviet conflict.

While pursuing national interests and contesting preponderance in the region, those geo-strategic values of the Korean Peninsula for the U.S. and PRC produce structural pressure and influence regulating the behavior and strategic choices of South and North. However, it does not necessarily mean this structure and the influences of superpowers were the only determinants contributing to the continuation of the division. They could not directly intervene in both Koreas' internal affairs and impose the will to both Koreas to choose policies to meet their interests. Rather, they took the advantages of the distinctive relations and desires for security of South and North Korea.

## **2. The U.S.-China Rivalry and the Korean Peninsula**

The contemporary Northeast Asian security environment is dominated by the power dynamics of the two strongest countries, China's political, economic ascendance and the U.S.'s relative decline. Thus, the geostrategic future of Northeast Asia largely depends on the choices and preferences of the two powers.<sup>59</sup> This great, changing dynamic in Northeast Asia has precipitated extensive and diverse discussions on whether China presents a threat to the U.S. and its other allies in the region. Scholars have been divided into optimist and pessimist to answer the question. Optimists argue that China's economic growth depends on the Western-centered system, continued open and interdependent international economic relations, so that China should peacefully rise;

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<sup>58</sup> Shen Dingli, "North Korea's Strategic Significance to China," *China Security*, (Autumn 2006): 19–34.

<sup>59</sup> G. John Ikenberry, "Geopolitics of Strategic Asia: 2000-2020," In *Strategic Asia 2010–2011*, edited by Ashley J. Tellis, 24. Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2010.

also other states use China's rise as an opportunity for their economy.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, Realpolitik pessimists see China's rise and conflict as inherently so because a wealthy, strong China would not remain a status quo power, but an aggressive state determined to dominate Asia. Also, the United States will not tolerate the loss of its hegemony in the region.<sup>61</sup>

Thus, it is difficult to determine the future direction of U.S.-China relations. Indeed, neither of these arguments has been proven yet because close cooperation and severe conflict are still absent in the relations between two super powers.<sup>62</sup> Practically, policymakers in those countries appear unwilling to give up either of the approaches, the economic engagement and realist-style balancing, due to the uncertainties about future directions. Thus, even though neither country is openly talking about hedging strategy, mutual hedging is becoming a core and perhaps even defining dynamic between the U.S. and China in Northeast Asia. Especially, the uncertainties—derived from opaque intention, “implicitly competitive strategies, and potentially coercive policies of the other side”—drive both states to continuously adopt balancing strategy in order to check their counterpart's influence and impure intentions while seeking economic cooperation.<sup>63</sup>

In this balance of power context and according to power-transition theory, one can simply assume that if one power falters, its counterpart will be dominant. Thus, when Beijing seeks to expand its influence in its key arena, it will meet with determined resistance from Washington. Also, unless one power gains significantly superior strength over the other or is willing to concede its preponderance in the region, East Asia would

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<sup>60</sup> David C. Kang, “Why China's Rise Will Be Peaceful: Hierarchy and Stability in the East Asian Region,” *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 3 (Sep. 2005), 551-554.; G. John Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the Liberal System Survive?” *Foreign Affairs*, (Jan/Feb 2008): 23–37.

<sup>61</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, “China's Unpeaceful Rise,” *Current History* 105, no. 690 (2006): 160-62.; Ronald L. Tammen and Jacet Kugler, “Power Transition and China-US Conflicts,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 1, (2006): 35-55.; Jack S. Levy, “Power Transition Theory and the Rise of China” in Robert S. Ross, and Feng Zhu, eds., *China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, “The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?,” *International Security* 30, no. 2 (Autumn 2005): 7–45.

<sup>63</sup> Evan S. Medeiros, “Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability,” *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2005-06), 145–167.



likely be split along geographic and ideological lines with continental and maritime spheres of influence due to competition between both powers.<sup>64</sup> The problem for the inter-Korean relations is that the Korean Peninsula is geologically located right in the middle of the collision of both superpowers' realistic interests. Also, the South and North are respectively involved as a member of continental and maritime spheres of influence. Therefore, when there is a continuing and perhaps mounting measure of tension and rivalry between the U.S. and China, the inter-Korean relations will be separated by Washington and Beijing's efforts to weaken and neutralize each other's nascent coalition and bind its friends into a more tightly integrated coalition.<sup>65</sup> In other words, how these two countries define their relations and seek respective national interests tremendously influences the inter-Korean relations.

### **3. The Preferred Status of the Korean Peninsula**

#### ***a. Preferences of the U.S. on the Inter-Korean Relations***

Henry Kissinger asserts "a change in the international environment so likely to undermine the national security... must be resisted no matter what form the threat takes or how ostensibly legitimate it appears."<sup>66</sup> For the reason, the U.S. has two premises for the inter-Korean relations: absence of severe conflict and continuity of preponderance. First of all, the U.S. takes for granted the peace and stability in the region, where it has key trading partners and allies, as its vital interest for the economic prosperity and preponderant status.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>66</sup> Henry Kissinger, "How to Achieve the New World Order," *Time*, March 14, 1994: 74.

	<b>U.S. Two-Way Merchandise Trade (\$billions)</b>		
	<b>1997</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>% Of Total U.S. Trade</b>
<b>European Union</b>	305.9	601.6	19.3
<b>East Asia</b>	508.5	940.4	30.2

Table 4. The U.S. Trade with Asia and Europe (Figures for 1997 and 2007)<sup>67</sup>

In this perspective, the U.S. postulates following the second premise as part of vital national security interests:

- (1) Regional stability and the absence of any dominant power or group of powers that would threaten or impede U.S. access or interests
- (2) Regional prosperity and the promotion of free trade and market access<sup>68</sup>

Thus, within the broad context of the U.S. security strategy for the East, deterring and preventing any possible risk elements destabilizing the region and threatening allies are crucial. In the current regional security environment, the problems of Pyongyang, the nuclear weapons program, hostile military readiness and failed economy become the most precarious and uncertain factors for the U.S. Especially, a war initiated by North Korea is the worst-case scenario. Although the U.S.-ROK alliance would overwhelm the battlefield, due to the large size of the North Korean conventional military and possibly a nuclear weapon, the scale of casualties and the associated economic, humanitarian crisis would be disastrous for all involved. Furthermore, the scale of war would not limit the level of the peninsula because of complicated security connections and alliance pacts with other regional states. Thus, for the U.S., maintaining a strong defense commitment to the ROK in order to deter aggression, and dismantling North Korea's nuclear program not to threaten its allies, are regarded as its obligation. In a broad sense, in the longer term, the U.S. recognizes a unified Korea as a solution that

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<sup>67</sup> Ralph A. Cossa, Brad Glosserman, Michael A. Mcdevitt, Nirave Patel, James Przystup, Brad Roberts, *The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region: Security Strategy for the Obama Administration* (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security, 2009), 21. ; East Asia includes ASEAN, China, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 10.

effectively integrates the North and South, and thereby promotes solid stability by removing the risks of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the possibility of war.

On the other hand, according to the logic of the power-transition theory, “the U.S. will oppose any change in the status quo in Korea that suggests a decline in American international influence relative to a rising China.”<sup>69</sup> One of the most prominent challenges to the U.S. in the Korean Peninsula is the precarious stickiness of the military commitment “in the wake of future political reconciliation in Korea.”<sup>70</sup> For Washington, the best scenario of the inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification is to preserve the stable and democratic status quo on the peninsula; maintain a free market economy; forsake nuclear weapons programs; and to forge a permanent alignment to Washington. However, given the growing Chinese influence on the peninsula politically and economically since the end of the Cold War, the more the South conciliate with the North, “the stronger the Chinese position is likely to be while the relative U.S. strength in the region is likely to decline over time.”<sup>71</sup> In this context, after the reunification, the absence of a security threat for the South would significantly undermine the justification to stay on the peninsula. Therefore, unless Washington proves that the U.S. is a better long-term alliance option, compared to China, the rosy option of maintaining the United States Forces Korea (USFK) permanently will become more uncertain. In other words, promoting inter-Korean reconciliation would not be the short or mid-term interest for the U.S. as long as it will deteriorates its strategic status in the peninsula.

#### ***b. China’s Preference on the Peninsula***

China also seems to prefer the status quo in the peninsula.<sup>72</sup> In the post-Cold War era, the main focus of China’s national objective is to sustain a high level of undistracted domestic economic growth, and it has successfully achieved the goal based

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<sup>69</sup> Avery Goldstein, “Power Transitions, and China’s Rise in East Asia,” *Ibid.*, 33–34.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> David Coghlan and Army War College (U.S.). Strategic Studies Institute, *Prospects from Korean Reunification* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2008), 10.

<sup>72</sup> Jaeho Hwang, “China’s Future and South Korea’s Security Implications,” *Journal of East Asian Affairs* 21, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2007), 104.

upon regional stability and free-trade system. Thus, in order to maintain the high growth rate until reaching its desired end state, Beijing should promote stability and prosperity in East Asia, keeping a favorable precondition of economic development. Therefore, China puts the amicable political and security relations with neighboring states, including South Korea, on high priority to reduce international concern over China's growing power.<sup>73</sup> Also, China firmly opposes any conflict that could possibly drive the region into chaos and negatively affect China's economy and national interests. For this reason, to some extent, China admits the necessity of the current U.S. forces in the region in terms of deterrence of the war and conflict between regional states.

Within this context, Beijing has concerns over tensions between the Koreas, the North Korean nuclear weapons program, and the fragile Pyongyang regime due to its precarious characteristic destabilizing regional relations. Most importantly, an undesirable escalation in tensions and a sudden collapse of the North would possibly provide excuses to U.S.-ROK alliance to intervene in North Korean issues in which the PRC will not be able to avoid confrontation. Furthermore, in the extreme case, the PRC could be entrapped in a war waged by Pyongyang. Also, the instability and abrupt collapse of the North Korean regime would impose unwanted high prices, such as relief and recovery payments, a large numbers of North Korean refugees which would flowing in the China, or possible armed conflicts on the peninsula, forcing China to intervene.<sup>74</sup> For these reasons, the PRC puts the peace and stability of the peninsula on high priority, and supports the peaceful reconciliation process between the South and North as a fundamental solution to resolve the ongoing problem.

However, the uncertainty of the reunified Korea forces China to be reluctant to support the inter-Korean reconciliation process. In the context of the competition with the U.S., the PRC has actively sought improved relations with South Korea in the hope of undermining U.S. influence and as a countermeasure to balance against the U.S.'s encirclement. Also, Sino-ROK relations have improved significantly

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<sup>73</sup> Michael D. Swaine, "Managing China as a Strategic Challenge," In Ashley J. Tellis et al., *Strategic Asia 2008-2009* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2008), 75–76.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

based on the explosively increased trading size. However, Beijing is not sure whether a South Korean-led successful engagement and reconciliation with the North will become a benefit or a boomerang that comes back to threaten its security. Firstly, Beijing doubts Seoul's attitude that it is reluctant to lose its alliance relationship with the U.S. In this case, South Korea will not forsake the patron relations with the U.S.; for China, it means taking over the entire peninsula by South Korea would mean facing the direct U.S. military presence on its border.<sup>75</sup> Also, without resolving the Taiwan issue, Beijing would believe that diminishing influence on the North decreases China's leverage vis-à-vis Taiwan. In other words, the loss of an important strategic buffer zone may result in nothing but an increased threat. Furthermore, China will intrinsically have issues with the emergence of the strong united Korea. The united Korea might turn its attention to unpleasant issues such as territory and historical problems.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, China would be more content with the current status of a divided Korea ensuring a preoccupied and weak state on one of China's borders. In this context, also, as long as Pyongyang does not severely undermine Beijing's security interests, Beijing has "no compelling reason to push for Korea's immediate political reintegration, even by peaceful means."<sup>77</sup> Beijing would not pressure North Korea too hard because of the fear of triggering a collapse or losing influence on the Kim Jung-Il regime.<sup>78</sup> Also, they basically favor reform by the Kim government rather than regime change or collapse. In other words, China's high strategic interests lay in maintaining peace and stability on the peninsula and regional status quo.

#### **4. Prisoner's Dilemma: Strategic Priorities of the U.S. and PRC**

Inherently, the threat perception and mutual strategic understanding of the U.S. and PRC significantly influence the inter-Korean reconciliation process and the feasibility of reunification. As noted above, the most shared strategic interests between

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<sup>75</sup> Roy, "China and the Korean Peninsula," 1–4.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>77</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, "Hastening Korean Reunification," *Foreign Affairs* 76, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 1997): 78.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

the U.S. and PRC in the Korean Peninsula are in preserving peace and stability that is one of the desirable outcomes and obvious possibilities enabling both states to reach the cooperation and coordination. At least in three aspects, the U.S. and PRC agree with the “three no’s of policy toward the Korean Peninsula: no nukes, no war, and no abrupt collapse of North Korea.”<sup>79</sup> Without doubt, in the longer term, both superpowers agree with that a unified Korea will be far more stable than the antagonistically divided two Koreas.

U.S.	CHINA		
		C	D
	C	<b>Peacefully Reunified Korea</b> (Peace & Stability without WMD)	<b>U:</b> Loss of Forward Base & Influence <b>C:</b> A pro-China reunified Korea
	D	<b>U:</b> A pro-U.S. reunified Korea <b>C:</b> Loss of Buffer & Influence	<b>Status Quo and Divided Korea</b> (Ongoing Tension and WMD Issues)

Table 5. Prisoner’s Dilemma between the U.S. and China on the Korean Peninsula

However, within the context of U.S.-PRC hegemonic competition in the post-Cold war era, uncertainties and lingering doubts are dominating their relations, even though they have ongoing cooperation in various areas. The Korean Peninsula is regarded as a security asset for both states, related to a security dilemma of relative gains and losses. In other words, because of the security strategic values of the South and North, one’s efforts at increasing influence on the peninsula are strongly interpreted as decreasing the security of others. Thus, even though there are incentives to cooperate between them, the uncertainties and doubts make them reluctant to approach the issue of the inter-Korean reconciliation seriously. Those uncertainties, doubts, and differences of strategic preferences on the inter-Korean reconciliation push both superpowers into a typical Prisoner’s Dilemma, in which both players’ optimal strategies are defection.

<sup>79</sup> Scott Snyder, “U.S.-China Relations and Regional Security,” panel on the Korean peninsula, April 27–29, 2003, Honolulu, HI, 1.

Therefore, under the current environment, unless the reunification guarantees both power's status and preponderance, their strategic behavior will contribute to the continuity of the division of Korea.

As described previous section, there are several options to reach cooperation even in the Prisoners' Dilemma game. Ideally, if the U.S. and China peacefully coexist with the mutual understanding or are enforced by a third player, the external pressure separating both Koreas would be significantly decreased. However, there are simply no available measures or an "enforcer" to draw cooperation in the current security environment. Despite the increasing regional economic interdependence and integration, no comprehensive multilateral security framework emerged for possibly regulating and supervising the relationship. Indeed, South Korea tried to adopt the concept of "balancer" in order to mediate strategic interests of both powers and encourage cooperation to some extent, but it revealed the limitations because of its lack of capability to deter two superpowers, and basically, the South cannot be an enforcer because it should depend on the U.S.-ROK alliance whenever it faces security threat.<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, the "tit-for-tat" strategy for the iterated Prisoner's dilemma game is not working in the U.S.-PRC rivalry for the inter-Korean issue. First of all, because the U.S. and PRC are the super powers which their strategic interests are over several regions, international institutions, and diverse security aspects, clashing between the two super powers generates the significant impact on diverse and extensive dimension. Thus, despite the reunification and reconciliation provides regional benefits to both rivalries, it is difficult to expect that both powers take greater risk for the inter-Korean reconciliation. Indeed, the reunification and reconciliation is not an imminent interest for the U.S. and PRC simply because the current status quo is not the worst scenario for both sides and provides significant certainty—at least absence of major warfare and their significant strategic status—rather than that in the reunified Korean Peninsula. Also, to some extent, they already enjoy peace and stability under the current system. Therefore, unless a significant threat is imposed to both sides, such as war or a nuclear threat, there is no

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<sup>80</sup> Chae-Jin Lee, "The Limits of South Korea's Strategic Choices," *Asia Policy*, no3 (January 2007), 71–74.

reason that both superpowers would risk their preponderance by disturbing the status quo. In this context, despite both rivalries play the iterated prisoner's dilemma game, the tit-for-tat would not occur for the Korean Peninsula.

In short, the two super powers' efforts to realize their maximum security interest drive the inter-Korean relations on the peninsula into their respective advantageous position produce not only peace and stability but also the endurable status quo. The tendency to continue the status quo not only results from the endogenous factors' influence, but also is derived from the inter-Korean dynamics. The four players share a short-term interest in stability and certainty on the Korean Peninsula, which the division provides. Unless these countries find interest in the long-term peace on the peninsula, the continuing competition between rivalries works as a centrifugal force separating South and North Korea.

#### **D. THE INTER-KOREAN RIVALRY AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

*War can only be prevented if you will fight and keep a strong stance. If a bully sees you preparing for a fight by running and working out, he will think differently. You must prepare for war in order to gain peace.*

- Chun Doo-hwan, former ROK president (1982–87)

*When the agreements made in the inter-Korean summit are materialized one by one, the Korean Peninsula will be freed from the legacy of the Cold War and the yoke of division.*

- Roh Moo Hyun, former ROK president (2003–08)

Theoretically, if South and North Korea agree with issues of reconciliation and reunification, they can reach a consensus, even under the severe external pressure. This is because the inter-Korea relations are intrinsically a matter for both sides. However, it will not happen simply because both Koreas' relations have been in the dilemmatic situation since the inception of division. Owing to its geographical location and size, Korea has been a battleground that absorbed and reflected broader hegemonic struggles for more than a century. As a result of the struggles, Korea was conquered, colonized, liberated,



and divided.<sup>81</sup> While going through these historical upheavals, both Koreans fought a tragic war and killed each other in the battlefield. Even though the Korean War was a kind of proxy war representing the clash of the super powers in the context of the global Cold War confrontation, it also became an important source of animosity, making each other pursue a tight vigilance, viewing each other as adversaries that were threatening security. On the other hand, the Korean nation has lived on the same territory as a homogeneous nation, sharing the same lineage throughout most of its long history, thus “the desire for the national reunification of the Korean nation is stronger than in any other nation.”<sup>82</sup> Therefore, Koreans have long held two contradicting views of the other side—as an enemy to be destroyed and as a partner with which to cooperate and be reunified.<sup>83</sup>

## **1. The Dual Identity of the Inter-Korean Relations**

### ***a. Relations as an Independent State***

This distinctive historical experience and “division structure” created ambivalent characteristics of identity in the inter-Korean relations, not only resulting in the physical geographic division but also political, economic, and social separation.<sup>84</sup> First of all, the identity of the inter-Korean relationship is basically based on an equal status as state vis-à-vis state. In the anarchical international system, in which the ultimate objective of states is the elimination of the security threat, both Koreas have incompatibility derived from ideological differences and animosity, and it drove both to prioritize their security policy of preventing or eliminating the counterpart’s threat in the name of reunification.<sup>85</sup> As the independent-state status, the most certain way to eliminate the threat is to conquer or make the other side subservient to the will by

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<sup>81</sup> Samuel S. Kim, “The Two Koreas: Making Grand Strategy amid Changing Domestic Politics,” In *Strategic Asia 2007-08*, 113.

<sup>82</sup> Tong Hui Ma, *Reunification of Korea is a Major Security Issue on the Korean Peninsula: The North Korean Perspective* (Stockholm: Institute for Security and Development Policy [ISDP], 2010), 6.

<sup>83</sup> Choong Nam Kim, “Inter-Korean Relations and the Future of the U.S.–ROK Alliance,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* X, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006), 75–106.

<sup>84</sup> Pyong-chon Yi, *Developmental Dictatorship and the Park Chung-Hee Era: The Shaping of Modernity in the Republic of Korea*, 1 American ed. (Paramus, N.J.: Homa & Sekey Books, 2006), 215.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

building a superior economy and military. Otherwise, they should have a peace agreement or treaty signed as normal state relations in order to avoid conflict. Thereby, unless there is a security agreement in the relations, both Koreas will endlessly doubt each other and prepare for uncertainty with realistic measures. Within this context of the relations, seeking reunification means absorption and conquest, or facilitating the collapse of the other side.

***b. Relations as the Same Ethnic Nationality***

On the other end of spectrum, another approach toward inter-Korean relations is to regard the two Koreas as a part of one Korea. Therefore, the reunification is the inter-ethnic issue that should be resolved with only bilateral efforts without external influence. Fundamentally, this irredentism has been an ultimate idea and basis of both Koreas' reunification policies.<sup>86</sup> From the perspective of the ethnic nationalist, the ultimate end-state of reunification is not the game of relative gain and relative loss for the South and North, but it is a constructive integration into the grand Korea. Thus, if both Koreas genuinely emphasize ethnic identity and work toward peaceful cooperation and coordination for the ultimate goal, the feasibility of the reunification is more plausible for the South and North, and they can avoid exhaustive and meaningless competition. Indeed, officially, both Koreas have approached each other under that premise. The consensus they have reached defined the inter-Korean relations as "Recognizing that their relationship, not being a relationship as between states, is a special one constituted temporarily in the process of unification."<sup>87</sup> This declaration was embedded in "the North-South Joint Communiqué of 4 July 1972," and reaffirmed in "the 1991 inter-Korean Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, Exchanges, and Cooperation."

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<sup>86</sup> Myung-rim Park, "Democracy and the inter-Korean relations: History, Structure, and Prospects," *In Korean Democracy and South-North Korea Relations* (Seoul: Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, 2007), 60.

<sup>87</sup> Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation between South and North Korea. 1992.

Also, this principle was declared again in “the 15 June agreement of the historic inter-Korean summit meeting in 2000.”<sup>88</sup>

Since the inception of two separate regimes on the peninsula, these two different identities of the inter-Korean relations produced contradictory and dilemmatic relations. They often asserted the importance of the peaceful reunification, but it never helped to decrease the military readiness and capability of both sides. Rather, the slogan of peaceful reunification has been exploited as a reunification strategy on their own terms. Both Koreas simply cannot give up their ethnic identity and state sovereignty. Therefore, the two Koreas have engaged in a fierce competition to be recognized as the only legitimate state on the peninsula by eliminating the other side. Especially, the failure of reunification through the Korean War triggered a “legitimacy war,” in which they attempted to undercut each other in every possible way.<sup>89</sup>

## **2. The Enduring Rivalry and Security Dilemma in the Inter-Korean Relations**

This contradictory relationship between the South and North drives them to have unique rivalry relations. According to Wooksung Kim, the inter-Korean relations can be categorized into “enduring rivalry.”<sup>90</sup> Generally, the rivalry relationship between two countries has been understood as a phenomenon to resolve expected and repeated conflicts involving the threat or use of military force. In the enduring rivalry relationship, the arch-enemies’ conflict lasts longer than other rivalry relationships. Especially in the Korean case, the incompatibility, derived from different ideologies, core interests, the absence of imaginative leaders, and reinforcement and reciprocity often make very difficult to terminate the rivalry.

Therefore, in this ongoing and enduring rivalry, the animosity and vicious war memory continuously reproduce suspicion and tension, driving both Koreas into

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<sup>88</sup> Kyeng-ae Park, “North Korea’s Defensive Power and U.S.-North Korea Relations,” *Pacific Affairs* 73, no.4 (Winter 2000-2001), 547.

<sup>89</sup> Seung-Ho Joo and Tae-Hwan Kwak, *Korea in the 21st Century* (Huntington, N.Y: Nova Science Publishers, 2001), 144.

<sup>90</sup> Wooksung Kim, “The Impacts of Truncated Power Asymmetry on Enduring Rivalries: The Case of North-South Korea,” *The Korean Journal of Unification Affairs* 54, (2010): 209–242.

possessing more capabilities to overwhelm and deter the other side. On the other hand, in the zero-sum perspective, an opponent's acquisition of additional capability is interpreted as a significant security threat and a reduced ability to defend. Therefore, both Koreas endlessly have sought a superior military capability or tried to offset the counterpart's superiority with additional means, by devising strategy and tactics (e.g., surprise attack and asymmetric warfare), acquiring a superior weapons system, enhancing the willingness of waging a war, and allying with strong countries. However, the improved military capability does not allow the superior state to enjoy enough security because it leads the other part of Korea to react with whatever means it takes to restore its military capability. In other words, making an adversary more insecure or increasing a state's military capability often produces the net result that reduces the state's security.<sup>91</sup> Thereby, both countries' security threat remains as unchanged. Therefore, in the balance of power game, neither Korea could achieve the superiority and mitigate counterpart's security threat. Also, both rivalries have not allowed the other side to achieve a decisive victory or have an overwhelming advantage on another. In this situation, conflicts are sustained in the relations and spread into the South Korean domestic politics; also, the ambiguity of the superior national power makes negotiation more opaque and deadlocked. The enduring security dilemma has led to stalemate with little room for barter or bargaining.

### **3. Balance of Power and Strategic Behavior of Both Koreas**

Even though the South and North "have been caught in a zero-sum, winner-take-all, mutual hostage situation"<sup>92</sup> for over fifty years, neither side could attempt to mount a major military operation nor achieve enough capability to challenge the balance of power. For one thing, at least, both possessed deterrent capabilities to protect itself from the other side. However, in the center of the security dilemma, both patrons' potential and practical military capabilities deterred both Koreas from direct military action toward another side. Particularly, the U.S. deployment in South Korea has taken a central role for

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<sup>91</sup> Charles L. Glaser, "The Security dilemma Revised," *World Politics* 50 (October 1997): 171–201.

<sup>92</sup> David C. Kang, "International Relations Theory and the Second Korean War," *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003), 319.

the deterrence, making the chances of clashes of war on the Korean Peninsula remote. Although the North has built numerically larger armed forces with supports from the strong communist neighbors, the U.S.–ROK military forces are much more capable and highly trained than the North. Therefore, the ROK could attain deterrent capability without entailing a massive conventional buildup, which would otherwise sacrifice the economic development.<sup>93</sup>

In this context, the South and North have shown different and similar balancing acts according to the various time periods when the relative superiority, military capability, and alliance relationships are significantly differentiated between them.

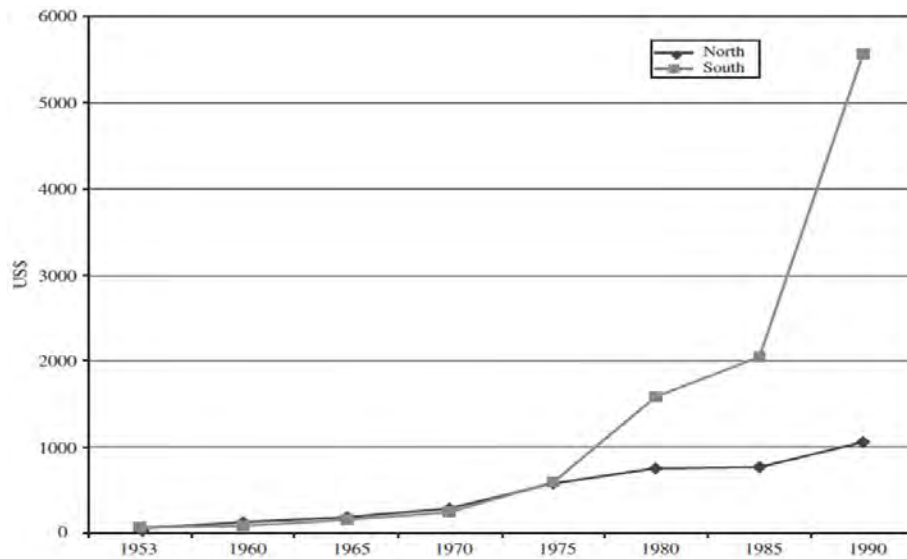


Figure 5. Per Capita GNP of North and South Korea, 1953–1990<sup>94</sup>

The economic and military comparisons of the South and North show that North Korea had a relatively equal level of military spending and economy scale, but quickly began falling behind after the mid-1970s. Thus, if North Korea might have hoped to win the war against the South, it should have been no later than the mid-1970s, when the U.S. lessened the military commitment in the region and also when the South was only

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Source: *Vantage Point* 19(3) (July 1996), 18; National Unification Board, *The Economies of South and North Korea* (Seoul: National Unification Board, 1988), 30, quoted in David Kang, “International Relations Theory and the Second Korean War,” 307.

beginning its economic surge.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, this balance of power greatly reversed when the South reached much higher economic development than the North since the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In these two similar but reversed periods, both the South and North showed analogous patterns of behaviors offsetting the counterpart's advantageous position, enhancing power to protect itself, and trying to subvert the other side.

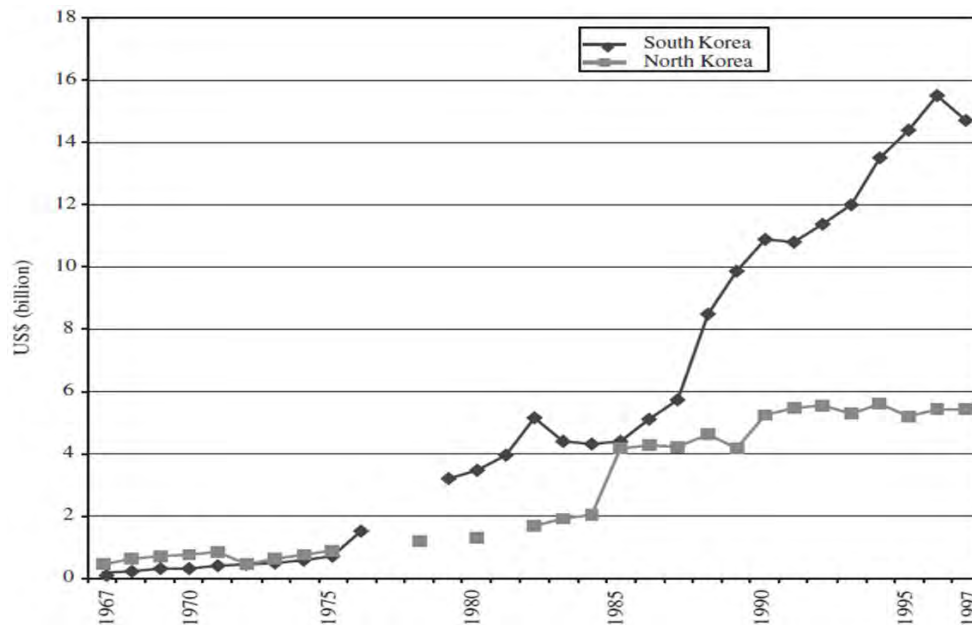


Figure 6. Defense Spending, 1967–1997<sup>96</sup>

*a. The North's Superior Balance of Power During the Cold War in 1970s*

During the late-1960s and mid-1970s, the most dramatic change in the strategic environment in East Asia was Washington's policy to scale back defense commitments abroad despite the absence of any corresponding decrease in threats to the region. The Nixon administration sought to reduce the number of troops stationed in South Korea in the broader context of détente and withdrawal from Vietnam. Nixon's Guam doctrine of July 1969 clearly stated that the U.S. would no longer bear the primary

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 306.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 308.

defense burden of its Asian allies. Implementation of the policy took the form of a general drawdown of forces in the Korean Peninsula, from 630,000 in January 1969 to 43,000 by December 1971.<sup>97</sup> In July 1970, the U.S. withdrew the 7th Infantry Division from the peninsula. This was the largest reduction of forces since the Korean War; moreover, the responsibility for defense along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) transferred to the ROK.

Country	January 1969	December 1971	Authorized Reductions
Vietnam	549,500	159,000	390,500
Korea	63,000	43,000	20,000
Thailand	47,800	32,000	15,800
Japan	39,000	32,000	7,000
Philippines	28,000	18,000	9,100

Table 6. U.S. Military Personnel Reductions, 1969–1971<sup>98</sup>

From Seoul's perspective, the Nixon doctrine of U.S. withdrawal from 1969–1971 was accompanied by U.S. appeasement with adversaries in the region from 1972–74. Especially, the appeasement approach took place while a series of DPRK provocations heightened early in the period. (i.e., the DPRK commando raid on the ROK presidential Blue House in 1968, seizure of the USS Intelligence ship Pueblo in 1971, and the shooting down of a U.S. EC-121 reconnaissance plane)<sup>99</sup> Such U.S. policy changes raised acute fears of U.S. abandonment in Seoul, regardless of Nixon's promise of reassurances. An ROK official recalled that "American passivity after the Blue House raid evoked true feelings of indignation and disappointment" over the U.S.

<sup>97</sup> Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia," 261–291.

<sup>98</sup> Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia," 274.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.; see also, Seongji Woo, "The Park Chung-hee Administration amid Inter-Korean Reconciliation in the Détente Period: Changes in the Threat Perception, Regime Characteristics, and the Distribution of Power," *Korea Journal*, (Summer 2009): 39–45.

indifference.<sup>100</sup> Also, President Park stated that Nixon's attitude sent a clear message “to the Korean people that [the U.S.] won't rescue [us] if North Korea invades again.”<sup>101</sup>

Also, although the Nixon administration encouraged the South to take part in the détente mood also on the peninsula, and Park signed a joint communiqué with North Korea on 4 July 1972, along with countless meetings on devising confidence-building measures, it could not help him to remove ample wariness about future security.<sup>102</sup> Even though the North positively responded to South's request for the dialogue, the North's attitude toward the inter-Korean reconciliation was still uncertain and dubious. For President Park, “the détente was “illusory,” cautioning against belief in the “spurious peace offensives” of North Korea and China, and persistently sought U.S. guarantees against further troop reductions.”<sup>103</sup> Later, it is believed that Kim Il-Sung considered the inter-Korean dialogue as a useful method to undermine Park Chung-hee's dictatorship and eliminate the U.S. forces from the peninsula, rather than a way to achieve genuine cooperation between the northern and southern regimes.<sup>104</sup> President Park also regarded the dialogue as a tool to gain time to build military capability and institutional unity while forestalling “reckless acts by Kim Il Sung” and reducing “chances of war.”<sup>105</sup> As a result of that, a joint communiqué finished without meaningful agreement, and dialogue was eventually cut off.

In fact, for the ROK, threats from the North were not increased, but its capability was decreased with the patron's reduced commitment. Along with the initial reduction of U.S. forces on the peninsula, and watching helplessly the fall of Saigon in 1975, the abandonment fear triggered South Korea to autonomously seek to elevate South Korea's indigenous economic, technological, and military capabilities, including the pursuit of a covert nuclear weapons program during the 1970s. Park levied a new defense

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 13.

<sup>102</sup> Woo, 44–45.

<sup>103</sup> Cha, “Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia,” 277.

<sup>104</sup> Woo, 44.

<sup>105</sup> Woo, 55.



tax on the country,<sup>106</sup> and “the size of the defense budget rose 51.2 percent, from \$461 million in 1973 to \$697 million in 1974. The annual rate of increase in defense spending reached 59 percent in 1976.”<sup>107</sup> Even the desperate diplomatic effort for the U.S. support led to the “Koreagate scandal.” “Anxieties over U.S. abandonment were especially reflected in the repressive ‘Yusin’ (‘revitalizing’) constitution, effectively putting the nation on a wartime footing, in October 1972, as well as the clandestine program to develop a South Korean nuclear deterrent.”<sup>108</sup> Park rationalized these measures as coping with overcoming dependence on an uncertain U.S. commitment in the long term and achieving strategic superiority over North Korea.<sup>109</sup>

***b. Reversed Balance of Power Since the Post-Cold War Era***

Interestingly enough, North Korea has shown similar pattern of behavior when it lost compatibility with the South. Since the end of the Cold War, North Korea faced significant changes in its lowered international status and relatively reduced military capability compared to South Korea. The inefficiency of the centrally planned economy and high military spending, along with drought and floods, drove the North Korean economy into a crisis.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, from the events of the demise of socialism, along with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the normalization of the relationship between the South and North's traditional allies, Russia and China, South Korea's superiority appeared to be inevitable. The South's ambitious political created more fear in the North. On the eve of his historic trip to Beijing in 1992 to celebrate Seoul-Beijing diplomatic ties, Roh Tae Woo declared “the main goal of my ‘northern policy’ was to open formal relations with North Korea's friends and allies, and through them to

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<sup>106</sup> Cha, “Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia,” 277.

<sup>107</sup> Chung-in Moon and Sangkeun Lee, “Military Spending and Arms Race on the Korean Peninsula,” *Asian Perspective* 33, no.4, (2009), 73–78.

<sup>108</sup> Cha, “Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia,” 277.

<sup>109</sup> Jonathan D. Pollack, “The Korean Peninsula in U.S. Strategy: Policy Issue for the Next President,” In *Strategic Asia 08-09*, 140.

<sup>110</sup> CRS Report RL32493, *North Korea: Economic Leverage and Policy Analysis*, by Dick K. Nanto and Emma Chanlett-Avery, 17.

influence North Korea itself.”<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the South ambitiously launched the “Sunshine Policy” during the two progressive governments based on the economic superiority in the name of reconciliation, economic cooperation and nationalistic identity. In this atmosphere, even though North Korea’s collapse seemed not to be followed sooner, the South’s superiority was obvious over the peninsula.

The Kim Jong-Il regime perceived the changes of balance of power as a grave danger to its security and survival, and the new changes of the security environment on the Korean Peninsula induced fear and a sense of crisis. Besides, since the 1990s, North Korea experienced the severely deteriorated economic situation and famine. However, the central dilemma the regime faced is that if Pyongyang fundamental undertakes economic reforms to solve internal problem, it will eventually disintegrate the national unity sustained by a highly controlled system, closing all doors from the outside world. In this situation, reforming the economic system and opening the market would mean the loss of control over its people and step closer to collapse. Moreover, the highly militarized North Korean economy, as seen in the ratio of military personnel accounting for 9 percent of total work force, and military spending accounting for 23 percent of GDP, further worsened the economic problems. However, Pyongyang simply cannot reduce its conventional forces under the inferior status compared to the South.

With the economic problem and insufficient resources, the North should compensate the disparity of military capability with the South. Pyongyang chose to develop the asymmetry and unconventional of military capability compared to the South while sustaining a large conventional military to withstand pressure from external and internal pressures. Most importantly, Pyongyang has attempted to acquire nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in a way to offset the imbalance with the South. When Moscow informed Pyongyang of its decision to establish diplomatic ties with Seoul, then foreign Minister Kim Young Nam warned that North Korea had no choice but to facilitate the development of necessary weapons, indicating a possible development of nuclear weapons. The main purposes for developing such strategic-level weapons are

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<sup>111</sup> *New York Times*, September 18, 1992.

threefold: (1) to offset North Korea's own vulnerabilities in the face of robust ROK-U.S. deterrence and defense capabilities, (2) as a bargaining chip to secure political, security, and economic incentives from South Korea and the U.S. and (3) to earn much-needed foreign currency through missile exports. Even though the nuclear weapons program deteriorated relations with the U.S., it made the rivalry persistent by providing the North with relative power parity.<sup>112</sup>

On the other hand, motivational asymmetry can compensate for the inferiority of a weaker state in power capabilities when the state has stronger motivational power, which is closely related to the stakes in a dispute.<sup>113</sup> In order to consolidate the regime's unity and enhance the "defensive power" to resist influences from other states,<sup>114</sup> the North attempted to tighten ideological armament (*Juche*), exercise "military first policy" (*Songun*), and adopt asymmetric military strategy and tactics.<sup>115</sup> This motivational power of North Korea greatly enhances its resistance and exercise of defensive power.

#### **4. Prisoner's Dilemma of Inter-Korean Rivalry in the Post-Cold War Era**

Based upon the current balance of power between two Koreas and their enduring rivalry experience, because of the ROK-DPRK rivalry's distinctive feature—dual identities, they play different types of games from the U.S.-PRC rivalry. Generally, with respect to the emphasis on one of either identity, there are three numbers of possible games: chicken-game, boxed-pig game, and prisoner's dilemma. First of all, as the two Koreas have maintained during the Cold War, if both choose independent state identity rather than ethnic identity, the feature of dynamics will be a zero-sum game which would never allow any cooperation. The second case is that one Korea emphasizes more on

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<sup>112</sup> Chung Min Lee, "North Korean Missiles: Strategic Implications and Policy Responses," *The Pacific Reviews* 14, no. 1 (2001), 95.

<sup>113</sup> A. George, *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993), 111.

<sup>114</sup> Hans Mouritzen, "Tension between the Strong, and the Strategies of the Weak," *Journal of Peace Research* 28, no.2 (May 1991), 219.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

ethnic identity whereas the other chooses state identity. In this case, the two Koreas play boxed-pig game, in which one party has more temptation to defect whereas the other has more motivation for cooperation. The final case is the prisoners' dilemma game when both sides choose the ethnic identity (the positive basement for reconciliation). One notable fact is that any of these games will not produce cooperation between South and North Korea.

First, if both have independent ethnic identity, the inter-Korean rivalry is more straightforward in terms of the security dilemma. The distinctive rivalry—seeking sole legitimacy on the peninsula—induces the profound incompatibility between the South and North, and it pushes the inter-Korean relations more close to the zero-sum game, in which one side's relative gains are directly linked to the counterpart's relative loss. In this game, as a result of optimum cooperation, the reunification would be strongly interpreted as the demise and compromise of the sovereignty and regime for a weaker side. Thus, there are robust uncertainties and distrust for reconciliation and the cooperation process. Also, it pushes both Koreas never to give up security assets, including autonomous effort and foreign support, to deter from the other side.

		Small Pig	
		C	D
Big Pig	C	5, 1	4, 4
	D	9, -1	0, 0

Table 7. Matrix for Boxed-Pig Game

Second, if two Koreas seek different identity from each other, it will be also very difficult to have cooperation because the one which emphasizes the state identity will always defect or suck counterpart's cooperation. On the other hand, if one Korea that chooses ethnic identity possesses dominant position over the other, it makes the boxed-pig game in which the defection is rational choice for the small pig because in any mutual cooperation, the big pig would take biggest share of benefits from the game; the defection

retains more benefits.<sup>116</sup> This game well explains the relations between the Kim and Roh progressive governments (ethnic identity, big pig) and Kim Jong-Il regime (state identity, small pig). According to the game, for South Korea, the cooperation has greater incentive than the defection. The more the cooperation occurs, the more South Korea has the advantageous position to lead inter-Korean relations and reunification with its greater scale of economy. On the other hand, North Korea has more incentive for the defection. In order to protect the regime, nuclear weapons program is an essential security asset, and economic support is indispensable for Pyongyang. In this respect, defection is always a rational choice for the Pyongyang because it enables Pyongyang to gain significant economic benefits from Seoul's Sunshine policy while continuing to develop the nuclear program.

ROK	DPRK		
		C	D
	C	<b>Peaceful Coexistence or Peacefully Reunified Korea</b> (Peace & Stability without WMD)	S: Suckered by the DPRK N: Gain time to develop WMD
	D	S: Leading Unification Process N: Absorbed by the ROK	<b>Status Quo and Divided Korea</b> (Ongoing Tension and WMD Issues)

Table 8. Prisoner's Dilemma or Boxed-Pig Game between two Koreas

Finally, when both Koreas emphasize more on ethnic identity than state identity, they will share the same ultimate goal—reunification. As the best condition for reconciliation, the two Koreas' ethnic identity will help to achieve optimal outcomes when both choose cooperation. For the North, the cooperation means abandoning nuclear arms and armed provocation and, for the South, providing economic, humanitarian aid and helping North Korean economic reform without attempts to overthrow Kim Jong-Il regime. While having cooperation and acknowledging the counterpart, the two Koreas can peacefully coexist with each other and eventually solve the nuclear weapons and

<sup>116</sup> Debin Zhan, "Beyond the Hostility: An Analysis on the U.S.-North Korean Relations by Game Theory," *The Journal of Peace Studies* 4, (2008), 44.

conventional armed conflict while relieving counterpart's concern for the security. However, even in this case, the prisoner's dilemma works between the two Koreas, wherein neither side can choose cooperation.

For more than fifty years, both Koreas have kept vigilance, animosity, different political system, and culture; therefore, they should have lingering doubts and deep distrust about counterpart's intention. Literally, they have anything measures which can clarify counterpart's true intention in the current inter-Korean relations. Because of that, the both Koreas would act similarly to the zero-sum game. Therefore, both Koreas should assume that the counterpart still retains hostile intentions and would defect for its cooperation when they choose security decision. These lingering doubts make them more hesitated toward dialogue and cooperation while persistently keeping large scale of military and maintaining tightened alliance. Therefore, both sides take a defection strategy in which their payoffs are smaller than mutual cooperation (R) but still higher than the counterpart (S).

Similar to the U.S.-PRC relations, the ROK-DPRK has any plausible measures to promote cooperation and punish defection to solve the prisoner's dilemma problem. Also, despite indefinitely and closely interacting relations, the "tit-for-tat" strategy seems not to have any effectiveness for their dilemma. One of the most important reasons is that both Koreas have a great power as their respective patron, thus its limited retaliatory movement would be undercut by the countermovement of opposition's alliance. For example, the South's economic support could easily be mitigated by substituting Chinese support. Also, based on two sets of alliance relations, the tit-for-tat strategy would inflict security dilemma and vicious chain reactions. Indeed, both Koreas take the tit-for-tat strategy from time to time (i.e. North Korean threat to use nuclear weapons, the U.S.-ROK military demonstration). However, these only further deteriorated animosity and strained the bilateral relations. Furthermore, the tit-for-tat strategy is not so effective because the North simply does not possess much to lose, thus it can endure even the severe sanction imposed by the U.S. and ROK. In contrast, the ROK has much to lose for the tit-for-tat strategy, thus it is reluctant to use it.

Therefore, even if retaliatory movement would be theoretically an effective strategy for the prisoner's dilemma, it does not provide the motivation to cooperate and restrain defection in the inter-Korean relations.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This chapter compares and contrasts the priorities of national interests of the U.S., China, and both Koreas with respect to the rivalries on the peninsula in order to illustrate the difficulty to modify the status quo. There would be controversies to define the national interest and priority of states related to the peninsula because of endlessly changing dynamics in relations, broader security concerns, and contingent issues. However, despite these difficulties, two important features are certainly identified in the two sets of rivalries. Firstly, with lingering doubts, suspicions, and uncertainties in their security relations, the four players exercise vigilance against its rivalry, and deeply intertwined rivalry relations prevent all players from stepping forward to the cooperation. However, even in the strained rivalries, in many cases, there exists common ground in which the rivalries share interests and can gain better result when they cooperate for it. Therefore, the possibility for the cooperation is still open for them.

One of the obviously shared interests for all the four players is the “maintaining peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula.” For over fifty years, this strongly shared interest has worked as a stabilizing force restraining major conflicts within the peninsula. However, the same factors contributing to the stability also work as preventing the status quo from changing. Even though conciliated inter-Korean relations will provide greater benefits to all the players in a longer term—in terms of the fundamental solution for the North Korean nuclear weapons program, possibility of major armed conflict between the two Koreas, North Korean provocations disturbing regional stability, and economic trouble of the North, the four players seem not to choose cooperation easily because these four players' lingering doubts drive them into the delicate prisoner's dilemma, in which two rational rivalries always have an unintended suboptimal result by choosing defection. Within the deadlock relations between the two sets of rivalries, the inter-Korean reconciliation would not likely happen unless these deeply interconnected rivalry's relations are dismantled.

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### **III. ALLIANCE SECURITY DILEMMA AND INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter analyzed how rivaling relations, between the U.S.–PRC and the ROK–DPRK, determine four players’ attitudes toward the inter-Korean reconciliation. In this chapter, this paper attempts to examine the other important relational links of causal forces, “two alliance coalitions,” between the U.S. and the ROK and between the PRC and the DPRK. As George Liska noted, “it is impossible to speak of international relations without referring to alliances.”<sup>117</sup> The alliance system has taken on greater importance in defining international relations in Northeast Asia and inter-Korean relations. Undoubtedly, an alliance works as an important security mechanism for each of the four players to counterbalance each other’s threat, but also the alliance linkage often works as a restriction on the freedom of action for security decision making and policy execution when allies are protecting different interests. In other words, inconsistent attitudes and policy priorities between alliance members produce obstacles for the inter-Korean reconciliation.

Indeed the U.S.–ROK and the PRC–DPRK alliances have sounded divergent voices within the relations since the formation of alliances. Also, as significant security environmental changes in the post-Cold war period, the divergence on threat perception and interest is inevitable for all four players. In this respect, this chapter focuses on how different stances or interests between allies influence the inter-Korean reconciliation. In order to understand when and how allies have different priorities and interests, this chapter briefly introduces the determinants of alliance cohesion and discordance by exploring existing alliance theories and alliance security dilemma theory. It then investigates two sets of alliances and different attitudes between allies in order to verify the influence on the inter-Korean relations.

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<sup>117</sup> George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), 2.

## B. ALLIANCE AND SECURITY DILEMMA THEORY

### 1. The Determinants of the Cohesion of the Alliance

Alliance can be defined as "... formal associations of states for use (or non-use) of military force, intended for either the security or the aggrandizement of their members, against specific other states, whether or not these others are explicitly identified."<sup>118</sup> As such, allies join forces in order to enhance their security protection. Also, the credibility of commitment—projecting the integrated power on the common interest—is the important criterion determining the effectiveness, existence, and capability of the alliance. There are three major factors influencing and determining the coherence of alliance in a realist perspective: balance of power, threat perception, and self-interest.

From the perspective of the balance of power theorists, the "balance means actual or constructed (through alliances) equality of military capability among the great powers" in order to prevent "one state or coalition from achieving dominance."<sup>119</sup> Kenneth Waltz defines balancing as "joining with the weaker side in an effort to prevent a hegemonic bid."<sup>120</sup> From this logic of the balance of power, the formation of alliances is often based on the "function of preserving the status quo"<sup>121</sup> and cooperating against common enemies.<sup>122</sup> Thus, when the imbalance of power between rivalries is great, the motivation to form and maintain alliances will be great. In other words, the more the opposing power weakens, the more the temptation of dissension and withdrawal from the alliance grows.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, "Alliance Theory: A Neorealist First Cut." *Journal of International Affairs* 44, no. 1 (1990), 104.

<sup>119</sup> Kevin Sweeney and Paul Fritz, "Jumping on the Bandwagon: An Interest-Based Explanation for Great Power Alliances," *The Journal of Politics* 66, no. 2 (May 2004), 429.

<sup>120</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 263–265.

<sup>121</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1972), 43.

<sup>122</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 52–53.

<sup>123</sup> Barry Hughes, *Continuity and Change in World Politics : Competing Perspectives*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J: Prentice Hall, 1997), 556.

In addition, the other pillar of the alliances' coherence is the state's threat perception.<sup>124</sup> An alliance is not probable without an adversary, because alliances are "against, and only derivatively for, someone or something."<sup>125</sup> Walt argues an "imbalance of threat," derived from the other side's "aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive capability, and the perceived aggressiveness of its intentions," drives states to form an alliance.<sup>126</sup> Thus, balancing is "allying with others against the prevailing threat."<sup>127</sup> From the threat-based perspective, "[t]he greater threat the state posed by an adversary, the greater cohesion of the alliance"<sup>128</sup> rises. In other words, when the threat perception decreases, the justification of alliance also decreases.

Third, the important determinant of forming alliances is the common interest.<sup>129</sup> From the interest-based theorist perspective, most states would rather pursue an alliance as a "means to profit"<sup>130</sup> and achieve particular security or non-security goals effectively. Thus, alliance cohesion depends on the calculation of the benefits and costs of shared common interests among partners. In this respect, the benefits of alliance, such as "deterrence of attack, defense capability against attack, preclusion of alliance or alignment between the partner and the opponent, and increased control or influence over the allied state,"<sup>131</sup> are greater than the costs, such as providing aid, facing the danger of entrapment and a counter-alliance, and sacrificing alternative alliance options and freedom of action due to the coordination with allies for specific policies.<sup>132</sup> Thus, the more the benefits the more the desire to form and maintain the alliance. Also, when the

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<sup>124</sup> Stephan M. Walt, *The Origin of Alliance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), 21–26.

<sup>125</sup> George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), 12.

<sup>126</sup> Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 263–265.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>128</sup> Snyder, "Allinace, Balance, and Stability," 125.

<sup>129</sup> Kevin Sweeney and Paul Fritz, "Jumping on the Bandwagon: An Interest-Based Explanation for Great Power Alliances," *The Journal of Politics* 66, no. 2 (May 2004), 429.

<sup>130</sup> Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back in," 72.

<sup>131</sup> Glenn Herald Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 43–44.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

common interests diminish, allies may renegotiate an alliance treaty and its characteristics, trying to find interests within it unless they do not want to abolish it.<sup>133</sup>

## **2. The Alliance Security Dilemma**

According to Snyder, once an alliance has been formed, policymakers concern themselves more with alliance management than alliance formation, because alliances are never absolutely firm. Thus, they should decide how much commitment they will make toward their strategic partner. However, this assignment poses a dilemma for policymakers because either too much or too little commitment generates equally undesirable side effects, the so-called alliance security dilemma.<sup>134</sup> The key features of the alliance security dilemma are the fears of abandonment and entrapment with the formation of an alliance. Abandonment and entrapment reflect the combination of values and risks inherent in any alliance arrangement.<sup>135</sup> Abandonment refers to defection in the form of realignment with the opponent, mere de-alignment, abrogation, or failure to make an explicit commitment when the other allies most need it. On the other hand, entrapment refers to “being dragged into a conflict over an ally’s interest that one does not share.”<sup>136</sup>

Thus, the calculation for the risks and values of the preservation of the alliance would be the maximization of the states’ security interest from the alliance while minimizing their obligations to it.<sup>137</sup> If risk exceeds value for the alliance, fear of entrapment emerges. Also, if value exceeds risk for the alliance, over that of partner’s, a state is concerned more about abandonment of a partner. Also, the efforts to reduce the fear of abandonment and entrapment often work inversely towards each other. When a state strengthens its commitment toward an ally and stands firm against an ally’s adversary, the partner’s risk of abandonment decreases while the state’s risk of entrapment increases. In contrast, when a state withholds commitment or seeks to

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<sup>133</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 3.

<sup>134</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” 461–495.

<sup>135</sup> Victor Cha, “Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia,” 261–291.

<sup>136</sup> Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” 467.

<sup>137</sup> Victor Cha, “Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia,” 261–291.

conciliate with the ally's enemy, its fear of entrapment reduces, whereas the partner's risk of abandonment increases.

More specifically, Snyder introduced the determinants for fears of the abandonment and entrapment in the alliance security dilemma (as shown in Table 9). These factors are the principal determinants of the values and the likelihood that parties in an alliance impute to the various possible consequences of strategy options. These values and likelihoods are the proximate determinants of strategy choice itself.<sup>138</sup>

<b>Asymmetry of Determinants</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Decrease</b>
Direct Dependence on the Partner (Military capability, assistance, etc.)	Abandonment	Entrapment
Indirect Dependence on the Partner (Strategic, geographical interest, etc.)	Abandonment	Entrapment
Explicitness of Commitment	Entrapment	Abandonment
Disparity from Partner's Interest	Entrapment	Abandonment
Frequent Miss Behavioral Record of Partner	Abandonment	Entrapment

Table 9. Correlation between Principal Determinants and the Fear of Abandonment and Entrapment<sup>139</sup>

Thus, the more or less a state has characteristics of these determinants, the more or less “likely it is that the costs and risks of abandonment will outweigh the costs and risks of entrapment.”<sup>140</sup> As Snyder briefly summarized:

If a state feels highly dependent on its ally, directly or indirectly, if it perceives the ally as less dependent, if the alliance commitment is vague, and if the ally's recent behavior suggests doubtful loyalty, the state will fear abandonment more than entrapment. It will therefore tend to reassure the ally of its commitment, support him in specific confrontations with opponent, and conciliating the opponent. The reverse conditions will tend to induce opposite strategies.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” 471–472.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 471–472.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 474.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 471–472.

### 3. The Implication of Alliance Theories for the Inter-Korean Reconciliation

To summarize those alliance theories, the primary driving forces in alliance formation are the intensity and convergence of a threat perception and common interest between allies. As noted above, the higher level of threat for a state positively correlates with seeking the greater level of alliance cohesion. Also, the more the allies share such threat perception and interest, the more the alliance will experience cooperation on related issues. On the other hand, if the alliance shares divergent or lower levels of interest and threat perception, the allies will have a weaker cohesive alliance or will soon be disintegrated. However, these do not provide an explanation regarding cases of disparity of interest and threat perception, which allies want the alliance, but their focus of the alliance on divergent interest and threat perception.

Correlation	Alliance's Common Threat & Interest	
	Converging	Diverging
Alliance Cohesion	Increase	Decrease
Alliance Security Dilemma	Decrease	Increase

Table 10. Correlations between Threat Perception, Interest and Alliance

The alliance security dilemma theory helps to explain the coherence of an alliance as well as the divergent strategy within an alliance. According to the theory, if allies share the identical threat perception with respect to the other state, then cooperation should ensue. Because both would have the abandonment fears with each other, they will show more commitment to the alliance.<sup>142</sup> However, if allies have a disparity of interest and threat perception from a third state, then there will be intensified friction while executing different policies toward the state, because it produces fears of entrapment and abandonment in relations to asymmetry of costs and values.<sup>143</sup> In this situation, the most dilemmatic situation is that often a partner's rational option is a weaker commitment

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<sup>142</sup> Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia," 261–291.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

toward an alliance. As noted, if a state has a higher fear of abandonment relative to the partner, then the state will show a stronger commitment to the alliance in order to get the partner's reciprocity. However, the assured commitment raises the partner's incentive to defect because the partner can preserve its interests regardless of its attitude; low commitment also reduces the risk of entrapping in a conflict with an unwanted objective.<sup>144</sup> Thus, the state's desired reciprocity and the partner's reluctance produce divergent priorities and policies toward the third state, and dissatisfaction and friction between allies will follow while executing different strategies.<sup>145</sup>

The most important focus of this chapter is the asymmetry of "interests" and "priorities" on the security issues between the two alliance coalitions, which makes different sets of abandonment and entrapment problems—ultimately impacting on the policies for the inter-Korean reconciliation. First of all, the disparity of interests between external and internal powers is mainly derived from different dimension and scale of interest focus. While the U.S. and China's interest tends to emphasize global issues, or at least regional, that of the South and North is mainly limited to the Korean Peninsula. Commonly, a small state concentrates on a narrow range of vital interests,<sup>146</sup> whereas a big power has to take many considerations into account in choosing its course of action, including the impacts on other countries and regions. This different level of interests produces profound differences for policy approaches. Second, the end of the Cold War brought significant changes in relations between four players, and they should redefine threat with respect to the changed relations. Thus, the alliances have faced the asymmetry of fear of abandonment and entrapment with changed calculations of risks and values in security relations. In short, those two sets of the disparity of the abandonment and entrapment problems inevitably produced dissonance between allies while making and executing security policies.

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<sup>144</sup> Snyder, 466–467.

<sup>145</sup> Cha, "Abandonment, Entrapment, and Neoclassical Realism in Asia," 261–291.

<sup>146</sup> Robert Keohane, "The Big Influence of Small Allies," *Foreign Policy* 1, (Spring 1971), 162–163.

## **C. THE ALLIANCE SECURITY DILEMMA IN THE U.S. –ROK ALLIANCE**

### **1. Threat Perception Changes between the U.S. and ROK**

The alliance between the ROK and the U.S. has often been considered one of the most successful examples of security cooperation since the mutual defense treaty in October 1953.<sup>147</sup> The bilateral alliance was frequently “deemed a friendship cemented in blood, marked by memories of shared sacrifice.”<sup>148</sup> During the Cold War era, the primary purpose of the U.S.–ROK alliance was to deter the North Korean threat. Even though the U.S. and ROK had different levels of interests—preventing the spread of Communism in the region vs. preventing North Korean domination over the peninsula—the two countries’ best way to achieve their respective goals were consistent: the strong deterrence of North Korea. The alliance served as an effective security platform to deter North Korean aggression, and it enabled the ROK to create the stability and security for economic dynamism and democratic consolidation.<sup>149</sup> However, the U.S.–ROK alliance has been an imbalanced relationship close to the absolute asymmetric alliance, to which the ROK’s desire for the deterrence was totally dependent on U.S. military capability. Thus, the abandonment fear was always much higher among the ROK strategists, whereas the U.S. was concerned more about entrapment in conflicts between two Koreas. Within such an asymmetric alliance, the degree of commitment and the policy tendencies of U.S. administrations have been considered as the biggest determinants for South Korean decision makers, and its influence on the security policies and domestic politics was absolute during the Cold War period.

Over six decades, U.S.–ROK relations have changed from a patron–client relationship into a “normal” and “mature” interdependent partnership.<sup>150</sup> Substantial changes in the security environment in the post-Cold War era brought different

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<sup>147</sup> Graves, Ernest. “ROK-US Security Cooperation: Current Status” in *The Future of South Korean-U.S. Security Relations*. edited by William J. Taylor and others (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 13.

<sup>148</sup> Nae-Yong Lee, “Public Opinion About ROK-U.S. Relations,” *Challenges Posed by the DPRK For The Alliance And The Region*, James M. Lister, Ed., (Korea Economic Institute: United States, October 2005), 1–11.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Chae-Jin Lee, *A Troubled Peace: U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 280–81.



perspectives and different priorities toward the opposition actors in security policies, and it fostered diverging rationale in the alliance. The widening perception gap between Washington and Seoul concerning threats from North Korea and China, and policy divergence, have produced “tension, fissure, and mutual distrust” between the two allies.<sup>151</sup>

*a. The U.S. Interests and Threat Perception*

As noted in Chapter II, the U.S. has more reason to tighten the U.S.–ROK alliance in order to gain more aggregate power to cope with the rise of China and the uncertainty of its preponderance in the region. In addition, the strategic value of the ROK has increased beyond the Korean Peninsula. With the improved status of the ROK, the U.S. wants it to assume more security burdens, and participate in the regional and global issues in support of U.S. military operations, such as the war against terrorism. Especially, since the September 11 terrorist attacks, U.S. military capability has become “stretched thin as it fights global terrorism and leads international efforts to contain the proliferation and use of WMD.”<sup>152</sup> In this context, in May 2005, Gen. Charles Cambell, Commander of the Eighth U.S. Army in Korea, publicly stated that “the U.S.–ROK alliance is transforming into a regional alliance and that the operational sphere of the U.S.–ROK joint forces can be extended to Northeast Asia.”<sup>153</sup> Also, North Korean WMD becomes a troublesome situation, having impacts not only on the peninsula but regionally and globally.<sup>154</sup> As a member of the “axis of evil,” North Korea becomes not just a military threat to the Korean Peninsula, but also an element of instability in the region and a potential military threat to the continental United States with its nuclear weapons and missile development. Although it’s WMD and missile test were not successful, “the U.S.

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<sup>151</sup> Lee, “Public Opinion about ROK-U.S. Relations,” 1.

<sup>152</sup> Sandra R. Leavitt, “The Lack of Security Cooperation between Southeast Asia and Japan: Yen Yes, Pax Nippon No,” *Asian Survey* XLV, no.2 (March/April, 2005), 217.

<sup>153</sup> “U.S.-ROK Alliance Heading toward Regional Alliance (Hanmidongmaengeu jieokdongmanghwa),” *Chosunilbo*, May 25, 2005.

<sup>154</sup> Andrew Scobell, John M. Sanford and Army War College . Strategic Studies Institute, *North Korea's Military Threat: Pyongyang's Conventional Forces, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Ballistic Missiles*, Vol. 4 (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2007), 70.

is worried about the potential sale of nuclear material or weapons to groups such as Al Qaeda that would use such weapons on the U.S.”<sup>155</sup>

***b. The ROK's Interest and Threat Perception***

On the other hand, the ROK threat perception has moved into a different direction from the U.S. First, the ROK eventually started to see North Korea as a failed rivalry, although it remains as a state of “rhetorical hostility,” which has served as the main driving force to unite the alliance. Although Pyongyang does not seem to show hostile intentions toward the South, the North’s ability to wage a full-scale conventional war has been significantly degraded since the 1980s due to a confluence of factors such as the economic failure, ideological defeat, famine, international isolation, and the South’s greatly surpassed expenditure in the defense. Also, South Korea’s great achievements in its economic development and political liberalization over the decades enable Seoul to approach the North with the greater national confidence.

However, despite an incrementally decreasing threat of a major conventional war, North Korea remains a major threat, aiming its huge scale of conventional military toward the heart of South Korea. Also, North Korea’s growing emphasis on asymmetric military capabilities, especially a WMD program and low-intensity conflicts, make the South difficult to countercheck such unbalanced aggression with its independent efforts. As an internationally responsible nation, Seoul must be restrained to possess nuclear arms to offset the North Korean WMD. Also, due to its economic scale, developing autonomous capabilities for intelligence collection, offensive symptom detection, a precision target strike is still premature for the ROK military. Therefore, the U.S. military presence, strategic intelligence, early warning assets, and nuclear umbrella are essential for the South, enabling it to contain Pyongyang’s hostile intention, and as an essential basis to approach it with confidence.

The threat perception changes are not limited to North Korea but also toward China. From the end of the Korean War until recently, as a rigid ally of North

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<sup>155</sup> David Kang, “Rising Powers, Offshore Balancers, and Why the US-Korea Alliance is Undergoing Strain,” *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 14, no. 2 (2005), 132.

Korea, China was without official relations and had limited economic exchanges with South Korea. However, with the end of the Cold War, “China is no longer viewed as South Korea’s enemy.”<sup>156</sup> Since normalization in 1992, the bilateral trade relationship has continued to grow at a double-digit annualized rate, “driven primarily by China’s increasing demands for Korean products in the electronics, computer, semiconductor, and telecommunication sectors.”<sup>157</sup> China has surpassed the U.S. as South Korea’s number one trading partner since 2003, and based upon the successful economic relationship, they have expanded cultural exchanges and improved political relationships.<sup>158</sup> Also, the emergence of China as a source of dynamic economic growth, as well as the diversification of its economic relationships, has provided South Korea with a new “centrifugal force” that lessens its perceived dependence on the U.S. Also, the burgeoning Sino–ROK economic relationship and its influence would encourage South Korea to regard relations with China as its own economic, security, and political interests in the long-term implications.<sup>159</sup> However, on the regional level, there is no doubt that South Korea is one of the beneficiaries of the U.S. presence. Owing to the U.S. military, the ROK need not be drawn into the Sino-Japan conflict; at a minimum, it helps the ROK to exclude their conflict from the peninsula and to be free from their intervention and interference.

## 2. Dynamics in the Abandonment and Entrapment in the Alliance

Based on the difference of threat perception between the U.S. and ROK, the level of emphasized interest and policy priorities can be organized as in Table 11.

Alliance	Interest	Threat Perception Changes toward PRC and DPRK
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<sup>156</sup> Choong Nam Kim, “Changing Korean Perceptions of the Post–Cold War Era and the U.S.–ROK Alliance,” *Analysis from the East-West Center*, no.67 (April 2003), 4.

<sup>157</sup> Choong-Yong Ahn, “Economic Relations between Korea and China,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 29, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002), 61–72.

<sup>158</sup> Mark E. Manyin and Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service, *Foreign Assistance to North Korea*, Vol. RL31785 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2005), 2.

<sup>159</sup> Scott Snyder, “Alliance and Alienation: Managing Diminished Expectations for U.S.-ROK Relations,” *Pacific Forum CSIS*, Special Issue (August 2004), 3–5.

	Focus	PRC	DPRK	
			Conventional	WMD
U.S.	Regional	Increased	No Changes	Increased
ROK	Peninsula	Decreased	Decreased but Main threat	Increased but Secondary threat

Table 11. Divergence Threat Perception Between the U.S. and ROK

Primarily, the main threats of the U.S. and ROK are different from each other. Deterring North Korea from invading South Korea is no longer the obvious common alliance foundation for both countries, as South Korea's relative dependence on the U.S. declined. Owing to the confidence based upon the superiority of the social, economic, and alliance capability, Seoul can autonomously approach the North with more diplomatic and reconciliatory policies. The more the South achieves superiority over the North, the more the U.S.-ROK alliance poses challenges to the ROK-U.S. political and military leaderships. Also, due to growing ties with China, potential strategic discord between the U.S. and China becomes highly undesirable for Seoul, and it tends not to stimulate Beijing's political and security interest.<sup>160</sup> However, the South's dependence on the alliance will continue unless Seoul has totally independent security capabilities. With the only definite superiority in the conventional and asymmetry capability, the South is able to take the lead the inter-Korean relations when it executes any policy toward North Korea.

Second, a policy focus of two countries aims at the different levels of international relations. The U.S. strategic focus in the alliance has moved from the peninsula to the region and to the globe, whereas the ROK wants the alliance to remain on the peninsula rather than be expanded to the region.<sup>161</sup> From the South Korean perspective, the U.S.-ROK alliance must guarantee its security first unless the North Korean threat remains. Expanding the role of the alliance to the regional and global level is secondary to solving the North Korean problem, whereas the U.S. has priorities on the

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<sup>160</sup> Chang-hee Nam, "Relocating the U.S. Forces in South Korea: Strained Alliance, Emerging Partnership in the Changing Defense Posture," *Asian Survey* 46, Issue 4 (2006): 615-631.

<sup>161</sup> Taik-Young Hamm, "The Self-Reliant National Defense of South Korea and the Future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance," *Nautilus Policy Forum Online* 06-49A (2006): 3.

broadier issues rather than inter-Korean relations. In focusing on the level of differences, the problem of North Korea's WMD arsenal, including a formidable ballistic missile inventory, gives different implications to the alliance in terms of choosing a policy and setting a priority.

In short, the different threat perceptions and divergent levels of interest provide important policy implications in the alliance. According to the alliance security dilemma theory, both (the U.S. and ROK) have the abandonment fears from the partner's potential defection, as well as ongoing entrapment fears from involvement in the partner's security issues, which is secondary. The U.S. retains abandonment fears at the regional level from the ROK, whereas the ROK retains abandonment fears in the inter-Korean bilateral level from the U.S. Because both allies retain abandonment fears, they want to strengthen the alliance ties and show commitment. However, the entrapment fears for unwanted burdens by involving in partner's priority area make each hesitate to participate in the ally's security policies. Ironically, both allies have strong desire to maintain the alliance but weak motivation to commit its secondary interest but primary for the partner. This divergence produces discordance and inconsistent voices between allies while executing respective primary security strategy; and the collision of priorities generates friction for the effective execution of the security policy.

### **3. Cases of Alliance Security Dilemma in the U.S.–ROK Alliance**

The following two events are representative cases that illustrate the divergence of priorities between the U.S. and ROK.

#### ***a. TMD vs. KMD***

Divergence reveals many issues between U.S. and ROK alliances. One of the representative issues is the controversial participation for the U.S.-led Theater Missile Defense (TMD) program, which was suggested by Washington when North Korea launched the ballistic missile test in 1998. Superficially, it is designed to defend the North Korean missile threat, but the underlying purpose is aimed at China and Russia's inter-continental ballistic missiles, one of the crucial capabilities to neutralize the potential enemy's second-strike capability. Thus, China and Russia oppose the TMD program and

regard it as a significant strategic threat. Therefore, participating in this global-level TMD program could stimulate China and entrap the ROK in the conflict between Washington and Beijing. In order to moderate such a problem, South Korean experts recommended limited participation in TMD, so-called Korean Missile Defense (KMD) separated from the U.S. TMD. Practically, the TMD system would not provide significant capabilities to the ROK for its defense because North Korea's short-range missiles and long-range artillery are much more threatening than ballistic missiles within the proximity to the North.<sup>162</sup> The KMD only allows a low-tier defense system and does not join in any type of defense system targeting inter-continental ballistic missile-like long-range missiles. Thus, the KMD provides rationale not to participate in the TMD and convince China and Russia that the system is designed to defend, not offend.

***b. USFK Strategic Flexibility***

Another representative example is the debate for USFK's strategic flexibility. Since the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001, the U.S. has instigated a Global Defense Posture Review and defense transformation process of its forces abroad. The basic idea of strategic flexibility is that the U.S. is able to utilize its forces overseas more flexibly and efficiently by relocating USFK to other regions where the U.S. faces conflicts. It means the U.S. forces in Korea would be involved in regional and global missions beyond traditional peninsula deterrence missions.<sup>163</sup> However, Seoul reacted sensitively to the strategic concept of the USFK's possible withdrawal and involvement in the other regional conflicts. Indeed, the USFK's flexibility bolstered South Korea's fears of both abandonment and entrapment at the same time.<sup>164</sup>

Primarily, the strategic flexibility and the overall realignment of the USFK could eventually weaken its deterrence capabilities for North Korean aggression. As a part of the its global strategy, the U.S. planned to reduce the USFK to 25,000 until 2008

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<sup>162</sup> Tae-Hyung Kim, "South Korea's Missile Defense Policy: Dilemma and Opportunity for a Medium State," *Asian Politics & Policy* 1, no. 3, (2009), 371–389.

<sup>163</sup> Snyder, "Responding to Change on the Korean Peninsula," 15–16.

<sup>164</sup> Jang-Ryol Moon, "The Strategic Flexibility of USFK and the Future of the U.S.-ROK Military Cooperation Relation," *Strategic Studies* 12, no. 2 (2005), 183.; Jong-Chul Choi, "The Strategic Flexibility of USFK and South Korea's Strategic Response," *National Strategy* 12, no. 1 (2006), 80.

and relocate the 2nd Infantry Division deployed near the DMZ to south of the Han River in the Osan and Pyeongtaek area through the realignment. With the concept of the realignment, many South Korean conservative analysts were concerned that the South would lose “tripwire,” which served as the U.S.’s automatic intervention in the case of full-scale war so that the U.S. defense commitment to South Korea becomes more ambiguous. Secondly, the USFK’s regional deployment might entrap Seoul into unintended regional conflict, such as a possible U.S.–China military conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Many South Korean and Chinese analysts have worried that a strategically flexible U.S. force may be primarily aimed at using in a Taiwan Strait contingency.<sup>165</sup> Also, the relocated USFK in the Osan and Pyeongtaek area will serve the role as a U.S. forward outpost and supply base to contain China<sup>166</sup> to enhance the U.S. balancing capabilities.<sup>167</sup> Although both states agreed to the Joint Statement that, “the U.S. respects the ROK position that it shall not be involved in a regional conflict in Northeast Asia against the will of the Korean people,”<sup>168</sup> the fear of “entrapment” prevailed in South Korean society.

#### **4. The Implication of the North Korean Nuclear Program for Sunshine Policy**

The clash of policy differences between the former progressive governments in the ROK and the Bush administration toward the North Korean WMD program and the Sunshine Policy are the most obvious cases showing the alliance’s sharply divided attitude toward the partner’s policy priorities, ultimately the inter-Korean reconciliation approach. First of all, divergent attitudes toward the Sunshine Policy are basically derived from the different levels of strategic interests over a North Korean nuclear program.

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<sup>165</sup> Li Chuan, “US Military Plan for Taiwan Strait Combat Operations Exposed, Secret Preparations for Help to Rush from Three Directions,” *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, February 10, 2010, OSC.; Jung Sung-ki, “USFK Seeks to Expand Role Outside Peninsula,” *Korea Times*, February 24, 2010.

<sup>166</sup> Nam, “Relocating the U.S. Forces in South Korea,” 615–631.

<sup>167</sup> Cho, “The Realignment of USFK and the U.S.-ROK Alliance in Transition,” 103

<sup>168</sup> U.S.-ROK Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership (SCAP) Joint Statement on January 19, 2006.

*a. Two Different Attitudes Toward North Korean Nuclear Program*

The North Korean nuclear program is apparently threatening to the U.S., ROK and any other country in the region, but the level of intensity and scale of the perceived threat is different in each case. From the South Korean perspective, any possible armed conflict or nuclear war is an imminent, direct security issue that, than any other country, is a matter of life and death for South Koreans. Practically, if Pyongyang uses nuclear weapons for an actual military purpose, the devastating nuclear damage will occur on the Korean soil and among South Korean people. Thus, the denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula should be regarded as one of vital interest. However, because of the proximity, endured rivalry, and animosity with the South, the North Korean nuclear weapons cannot be a separated threat capability from the rest of its military forces, the world's fifth largest conventional armed forces, biological and chemical weapons, and a large amount of artillery pieces aiming at Seoul.<sup>169</sup> Also, the conflict involved in nuclear weapons will not be a limited war without intervention of conventional forces and vice versa. North Korea already possesses enough military capability to possibly inflict huge casualties and devastating costs on South Korea, in addition to the nuclear weapons. Technically, the demarcation between the devastation of conventional war versus nuclear war is ambiguous for Seoul.

Also, there is a somewhat naïve belief that North Korea will not use the nuclear weapons on the same Korean people and Korean soil that it ultimately wants to occupy and rule.<sup>170</sup> In addition, many analysts argue that Pyongyang well recognizes the fact that the second Korean War will definitely terminate its regime, so the main purpose of nuclear weapons should be as a last resort to defend the regime, or just a bargaining chip to negotiate for begging more assistance.<sup>171</sup> Thus, it is unwise to drive Pyongyang to the last corner to use the nuclear weapons while Kim Jong-Il regime has no real intention

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<sup>169</sup> Scobell and stanford, *North Korea's Military Threat: Pyongyang's Conventional Forces, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Ballistic Missiles*, 70

<sup>170</sup> Ted Galen Carpenter and Doug Bandow, *The Korean Conundrum* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 14–18.

<sup>171</sup> Scobell and Sanford, *North Korea's Military Threat: Pyongyang's Conventional Forces, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Ballistic Missiles*, 70



of using it. Thus, for South Korea, deterring North Korean hostile intention and removing any possibility of war is the first priority, rather than preventing the nuclear proliferation and transference its technology. In this context, raising spiral tension and the possibility of war by stimulating and provoking North Korea, such as participation in sanctions, would induce much higher risks and costs than participating in the U.S.-led non-proliferation policy.

On the other hand, for the U.S., the North Korean nuclear program is not only the issue limited to the inter-Korean conflict, the nuclear and missile problem is complicatedly related to its global strategy and security relations for the non-proliferation from Northeast Asia to Middle East.<sup>172</sup> Also, based on the global war on terrorism, the Bush administration's primary interest was to prevent the proliferation of North Korea's nuclear weapons, and especially, the North Korean nuclear weapons and technology could transfer to other rogue states and terrorist organizations. Compromising can be a touchstone for other rogue states and terrorist groups trying to possess WMD. Furthermore, it might induce a spiraling security dilemma in the region, and if its allies seek their own nuclear deterrence, the U.S.'s strategic status as a nuclear protector would be weakened. Therefore, from the U.S. perspective, allowing or acknowledging the North Korean nuclear weapons is not an acceptable option. Under the divergent threats and interests between the U.S. and ROK, they would choose a different path of policies for the solution.

***b. Two Different Attitudes Toward the Engagement Policy***

Based upon the strategic calculation, as well known, the Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun administrations had tenaciously pursued a comprehensive engagement policy toward their archrival, North Korea. Kim and Roh believed that a long-term peaceful coexistence between the two Koreas is not only desirable but also possible while pursuing the "Sunshine Policy" that emphasizes economic engagement

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<sup>172</sup> Chung Min Lee, "The Evolution of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis: Implications for Iran," *Proliferation papers*, (Winter 2009), 11–15.

Charles L. Pritchard, "Korean Reunification: Implications for the United States and Northeast Asia," January 13, 2005, The Brookings Institution, 7.

over military strength and accommodation rather than confrontation.<sup>173</sup> The centerpiece of the reconciliation strategy is that if the South solves the broader “North Korea problem,” the nuclear issue also will be solved, as well as the ongoing South-North confrontation. Indeed, this reconciliatory political tendency did not suddenly emerge from the romantic nationalist movement of the progressive government. Since the Roh Tae-woo administration’s *northern politick*, there have been continuous conciliatory approaches toward the North. Also, his successor, President Kim Young Sam, would have been the first national hero who realized the inter-Korean summit meeting were it not for Kim Il-Sung’s sudden death just few months before the dialogue. Thus, from Seoul’s perspective, the hard-line policy was not acceptable because it would have threatened the progress made by South Korea over the past decade<sup>174</sup> and would deteriorate the crisis environment between the two Koreas.

On the other hand, the apparent interest displayed by the Bush administration early in its tenure was fostering Pyongyang’s collapse or the use of military force against the North Korean nuclear program. Washington’s hard-line policy not only reflected the chronic fatigue from negotiating with Pyongyang, but also the confidence as a unilateral super power in the world and the urgency with which it confronted the new type of national threat. From Washington’s perspective, the “Sunshine Policy” that Seoul’s autonomous efforts to engage Pyongyang was contradictory to the U.S. global strategy to prevent the non-proliferation and impose sanctions on the North to dismantle the North Korean nuclear program. Also, it was a suspicious movement, combined with a closer relationship with China, which could accelerate the disintegration of the U.S.–ROK alliance. Thus, the U.S. would more hesitate to take part in the South’s engagement policy.

In short, the divergent threat perception and different levels of interest produce the asymmetric fear of abandonment and entrapment from the U.S. and ROK,

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<sup>173</sup> Eundak Kwon and Jae-Cheon Lim, “Crossing the river that divides the Korean Peninsula: an evaluation of the Sunshine Policy,” *International relations of the Asia-Pacific* 6 (2006):129–156. doi:10.1093/irap/lcil36.

<sup>174</sup> David C. Kang, “Inter-Korean Relations in the Absence of a U.S.-ROK Alliance,” *Asia Policy*, no. 5 (January 2008), 27.

and it induces each ally to take a different approach toward the inter-Korean issues. This disagreement over approaches to North Korea was based not on emotions but on national interests: Seoul has focused on avoiding collapse in North Korea while Washington has focused on nuclear nonproliferation.<sup>175</sup> Based upon the interest difference, the U.S. and ROK refused to take a harder line or the “Sunshine Policy” toward North Korea, and it has led to increased friction between Seoul and Washington.<sup>176</sup> Unless the U.S.–ROK alliance finds common interest again, it will be difficult to have a consistent political voice.

#### **D. THE ALLIANCE SECURITY DILEMMA IN THE PRC–DPRK ALLIANCE**

As explained in the Chapter II, the inter-Korean reconciliation issue is secondary for the PRC and DPRK. Thus, regardless of the alliance security dilemma, the reconciliation issues will not be a primary agenda item in the alliance, even though both officially support the peaceful inter-Korean engagement. However, the different perspectives and strategic priorities between the PRC and DPRK hinder the alliance from having a consistent political choice. The asymmetric abandonment and entrapment fears in the alliance prevent either state from choosing the other spectrum of policy, away from partner’s interest, thus it is difficult to change the status quo.

##### **1. Brief of History of PRC-DPRK Alliance**

As a communist brotherhood, with ideological and cultural affinity, the PRC and DPRK fought shoulder-to-shoulder against the “imperialist American invasion”<sup>177</sup> from 1950 to 1953. This relationship of “flesh and blood” was officially upgraded through the “PRC–DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance” in 1961. During the Cold War, the PRC–DPRK alliance was organically structured into several levels. Firstly, both countries shared a common adversary, the U.S.–ROK alliance under the

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<sup>175</sup> David C. Kang, “The Cause of Strife in the U.S.–ROK Alliance,” *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2006), 23–31.

<sup>176</sup> Nicholas Eberstadt, “Tear Down This Tyranny,” *Weekly Standard*, November 29, 2004; <http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/004/951szxxd.asp>.

<sup>177</sup> Immanuel Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 661–662.

Cold-War structure. Secondly, the geological proximity provided the PRC with a “crucial buffer”<sup>178</sup> against U.S. military intervention, whereas it provided the DPRK with a credible military capability for well-timed intervention. Thirdly, the DPRK was an important leverage and ideological legitimacy for the PRC to counterbalance the Soviet Union while deepening the Sino-Soviet Conflict. Also, for the DPRK, PRC’s recognition as a state was an essential legitimacy to maintain the Kim Il-sung regime.<sup>179</sup> Finally, the similarity of the Marxism-Leninism economic system and ideological political system helped them to share the same identity as a communist state.

However, since Deng Xiaoping ambitiously launched political, economic, and social reform, and the “open-door policy,”<sup>180</sup> and Beijing normalized diplomatic relations with Washington in 1979, the DPRK’s strategic value as an alliance eventually decreased. Furthermore, the end of the Cold War prompted the PRC–DPRK alliance to lose common ground and maintain the security relations. First of all, the PRC restored friendly relations with the Soviet Union in 1989, had improved relations with the U.S., and officially normalized diplomatic relations with the ROK in 1992 while Pyongyang was still maintaining a confrontational attitude toward the U.S.–ROK alliance. Also, their ideological and economic similarity gap had gotten wider as China successfully accomplished economic development. Moreover, with fast-growing economic interdependence, and political and military ties with the ROK, the PRC no longer regarded South Korea as a potential enemy. From 1992 to 1999, while the PRC–ROK summit meetings were held several times, there had not been high-level meetings between the PRC and DPRK.<sup>181</sup> Without sharing a common interest and enemy, the PRC–DPRK alliance significantly deteriorated.

On the other hand, the PRC began to reevaluate the strategic importance of the DPRK as the U.S. strengthened its alliance ties and commitment in Northeast Asia. The

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<sup>178</sup> You Ji, “China and North Korea: a fragile relationship of strategic convenience,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 10, no. 28 (August 2001), 387.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 387–388.

<sup>180</sup> Alan Lawrence, *China Under Communism* (London, UK: Routledge, 2008), 107–122.

<sup>181</sup> Hongseo Park, “Wooing the foe’s partner?: U.S. and China’s alliance strategies toward two Koreas in their power transition,” *Korean Politics(hankookjungchihakhoe)* 42, no 1 (2007), 303.

strained PRC–DPRK relations significantly improved with Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan’s visit to Pyongyang in 1999.<sup>182</sup> Behind the rapprochement between PRC–DPRK relations, there were the U.S.’s visualized balancing policies against China, such as the U.S.–Japan’s “the New Defense Guideline,” and agreement of Japan on the U.S.-led TMD system in 1998. Also, the U.S.–DPRK relations after the missile launch had significantly improved. As the U.S.–PRC rivalry became evident, Beijing actively sought counterbalancing measures, such as raising the status of Sino–Russia relations as a strategic partnership. In this context, the DPRK’s increased strategic value for the PRC and the necessity for survival for DPRK revitalized the traditional PRC–DPRK alliance.

## **2. The PRC-DPRK Alliance and the Alliance Security Dilemma**

### ***a. The PRC-DPRK Threat Perception***

Based upon the PRC–DPRK alliance’s threat perception since the late 1990s, the alliance security dilemma can be illustrated as in Figure 12. In comparison to the U.S.–ROK alliance, the PRC and DPRK have similar divergences regarding the security threat perception that produces asymmetric entrapment and abandonment fear to both sides. For China, the most important strategic value of the DPRK as an ally is an asset to check the U.S. hegemonic intention. DPRK’s hostile attitude toward the U.S. provides important diplomatic leverage and strategic implication to the PRC, while competing with the U.S. Thus, to some extent, Beijing would willingly accept North Korean provocations as long as they do not disturb the strategic interests. Other than that, China is reluctant to take additional risks of being entrapped in North Korean problems. Especially, Pyongyang’s hostile actions toward South Korea would strain the PRC–ROK strategic relations, which also cannot be abandoned. Also, Beijing hesitates to take the burden by providing much support to Kim Jong-Il regime because of its rampant irregularities and corruption in the economic system; the provision of assistance is like filling a bottomless vessel and would divert the aid to hostile purposes, which Beijing

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<sup>182</sup> Samuel S. Kim and Tai Hwan Lee, *North Korea and Northeast Asia* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002), 114.

does not want.<sup>183</sup> Furthermore, Beijing does not want Pyongyang to increase the regional tensions beyond the level its interest permits, which would disturb the stability of the economic environment and raise an issue demanding the role of China as the responsible stakeholder in the international community. Thus, the PRC's support would remain at the minimum level, which sustains the dependence of Pyongyang on Beijing.

Alliance	Interest Focus	Threat Perception Changes toward U.S. and ROK	
		U.S.	ROK
PRC	Regional	Increased	Decreased
DPRK	Peninsula	No Change	Increased

Table 12. Alliance Security Dilemma between the PRC and DPRK

On the other hand, for Pyongyang, China is the most important ally, providing essential support and aid to its volatile regime. Thanks to the assistance, Pyongyang could deviate from the international pressure and the South's peaceful offensive. However, Pyongyang is afraid of Beijing's overwhelming influence over them. The greater the Pyongyang depended on Beijing, the greater the restraints on their freedom of action. Furthermore, because of its divergent threat perception from Beijing, Pyongyang has fundamentally different strategic interests. First of all, although its primary rivalry is South Korea, Beijing's commitment toward the inter-Korean issue is unreliable for Pyongyang.<sup>184</sup> Secondly, Pyongyang seems to have an interest in conciliating with the U.S. rather than provoking it. From Pyongyang's perspective, the diplomatic normalization with the U.S. is one of the ultimate goals in an effort to acquire the guarantee for regime survival, and normalization can delink the U.S.–ROK alliance in order to weaken the unity of the alliance aimed at Pyongyang. In this context, the North prefers to have dialogue directly with the U.S. rather than participating in the six-party talks, without the PRC's presence. Indeed, in the negotiation process with the U.S., they

<sup>183</sup> Sukhee Han, "Alliance Fatigue amid Asymmetrical Interdependence: Sino-North Korean Relations in Flux," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* XVI, no. 1 (Spring 2004):155–175.

<sup>184</sup> Scott Zhou, "All teeth and lips – for now," *Asia Times*, October 21, 2006, accessed November 12, 2011, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/HJ21Ad01.html>.

expressed the importance of the U.S. presence in the region even after the reunification several times. In short, Beijing has more abandonment fears on the issues of the U.S. from Pyongyang's strategic approach whereas Pyongyang is afraid of being abandoned when it confronts with the South.

***b. North Korean Nuclear Weapons Program***

The North Korean nuclear weapons program is a complicated issue stretching over the regional level to the inter-Korean issues. From Pyongyang's perspective, the nuclear weapons would be important strategic assets providing security capability and diplomatic status, which serves well the desire for regime survival. However, because of its great impact on the region, it is almost impossible for Pyongyang to acquire such valuable strategic assets without the neighboring countries' agreement, especially the U.S., which has the will and capability to frustrate Pyongyang's intension. Thus, North Korea's primary goal toward having the nuclear weapons would be dependent upon on negotiations with the U.S. to acquire authorization.<sup>185</sup> Among various prospects for Pyongyang's negotiation cards, one of the most plausible scenarios of negotiations between the U.S. and DPRK is that Pyongyang would have to be willing to trade its strategic assets and position with the nuclear weapons. In other words, while insisting that the primary purpose of the nuclear weapons is limited only to the peninsula, if Washington allows nuclear programs, Pyongyang will accept the station of the U.S. forces on the peninsula as well as forsaking the mid-long-range missile programs.

From Beijing's perspective, the North Korean nuclear program is also a dilemmatic issue intertwined with the fear of abandonment and entrapment. Primarily, the North Korean nuclear problem provides a political card enabling Beijing to take an influential role in the process of solving the issue against the U.S. in the region. However, permitting Pyongyang to have nuclear weapons and negotiate bilaterally with the U.S. is not tolerable because it would raise the abandonment fear of the PRC.<sup>186</sup> If Pyongyang

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<sup>185</sup> Chung Min Lee, "North Korean Missiles: Strategic Implications and Policy Responses," 95.

<sup>186</sup> Hongseo Park, "China's Management of Alliance Dilemma over the Nuclear Crisis in the Korean Peninsula: Its Theory and Practice," *Debate on the International politics (Kukjejungchinonyi)* 46, no.1 (2006), 106–107.

succeeds to retain nuclear weapons, its security dependence on the PRC would significantly decrease, while the motivation of defection would increase. Also, the rapprochement with the U.S. and negotiations for its presence on the peninsula would deepen the imbalance of power competition in the regional structure. Indeed, the PRC's proactive effort to improve relations with Pyongyang was triggered by U.S.–DPRK rapprochement. Since Pyongyang negotiated bilaterally with Washington in 1998 for the Kumchang-ri nuclear facility, Taepodong missile launch and fulfillment of the Basic Agreement of 1994, North Korea attempted to normalize U.S.–DPRK relations during the last period of the Clinton administration.

	<b>North Korean Nuclear Weapons Program</b>		
	<b>Bilateral Negotiation</b>	<b>Multilateral Negotiation</b>	<b>Imposing Sanction</b>
<b>US-DPRK</b>	Rapprochement	Restraining US-DPRK	Enhancing US Position
<b>PRC</b>	Abandonment Fear		Entrapment Fear

Table 13. Alliance Security Dilemma between the PRC and DPRK

On the other hand, the PRC does not want enlarged tensions that would bring the U.S. and its allies into the confrontation, so that entraps China into conflicts and minimizes the legitimacy and influence. Thus, when Pyongyang's actions for the nuclear program get beyond Beijing's limits, Beijing participates in international sanctions in order for the legitimacy as the responsible stakeholder and restraining the North's intolerable actions. However, Beijing opposes the U.S.-led hard-line approach as the punishment in order to prevent the U.S. initiatives in the region and keep Pyongyang dependent on the PRC. Beijing's position was clearly revealed in the process of resolving North Korea's declaration of withdrawal from the NPT (Jan. 10, 2003) and the second and third nuclear crises sparked by the nuclear test (Oct. 9, 2006). Although China was working closely with the U.S. to resolve the nuclear issue, the PRC opposed the U.S.'s hard-line measures both times. In other words, while emphasizing the principle of the "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" and "peaceful resolution through dialogue" on the North Korean nuclear issue, Beijing attempted to undercut the U.S.'s hard-line



response and restrain North Korea at the same time. For example, when Pyongyang ignored Beijing's advance warning and proceeded with the nuclear test in October 2006, Beijing clearly opposed the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)—searching or seizing the suspicious North Korean ship—although it was in favor of the UN Security Council Resolution (1718) banning the import of suspected substances into North Korea. In short, the PRC does not want to be involved in unwanted disputes with the U.S. due to abrupt behavior on the part of North Korea, and it also does not want to lose the strategic interest with North Korea's bandwagoning to the U.S. In this context, the PRC prefers the multilateral approach—the Six Party Talk—toward the North Korean nuclear program because it enables Beijing to maintain influence in the process of dialogue, while drawing the U.S. into the framework providing the U.S.–PRC equal status and restraining North Korea's brinkmanship tactics.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Since the end of the Cold War, the two sets of alliance coalitions faced a significantly changed security environment that altered the treat perception of the four players; the cohesion of the alliance generally weakened in comparison to the Cold War era. Therefore, the four players had different priorities and interests from those of its partner, and it made the alliance difficult to have a consistent voice on any ally's security interests. In this context, in the U.S.–ROK alliance, the U.S. showed reluctance toward the ROK's engagement policy toward North Korea, while the ROK refused to take part in the U.S.–led sanction on the North Korean nuclear program. As a result of the divergent approaches, neither policy acquired explicit achievement in their respective interests. Also, for the PRC–DPRK alliance, the asymmetric abandonment and entrapment fear prevent both states from forming progressive or violent policies. Beijing would not allow Pyongyang to take a conciliatory attitude toward the U.S. and brinkmanship tactics in order to avoid the abandonment and entrapment problem. In addition, despite Pyongyang's abandonment fear derived from Beijing's ambiguous commitment to seek the security guarantees for the regime, such as nuclear weapons and normalization with the U.S., dependence on the PRC restrains itself in the context of the U.S.–China rivalry.

Such inconsistent policies between allies work as the great friction, preventing the status quo—the continuity of the division—from changing.

## **IV. THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE FOUR PLAYERS AND THE CONTINUITY OF CONFLICT**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapters explored how rivalry and alliance relations influence inter-Korean reconciliation. Obviously, both relational links produce friction between allies and rivalries, and work as impediments to conciliatory movement between the two Koreas. However, those relational linkages do not exist separately. As the inter-Korean rivalry is closely related to the U.S.–PRC rivalry, the U.S.–ROK alliance is interconnected with the PRC–DPRK alliance. Also, these relational linkages further connect one player with its ally's rivalry or rivalry's ally, even when the relationship is neither ally nor rivalry. As noted in the introduction, because of the relational linkages between two sets of alliances and rivalries, the four players are closely interconnected with each other, so that each player's strategic movements has influences on the three others, directly or indirectly. In other words, impact produces a chain reaction, along with the relational linkages and ripple effects spreading out toward inter-Korean relations.

In this respect, this chapter attempts to verify how the interaction between four players' relations influences the inter-Korean reconciliation. Particularly, the point is focused on the negative dynamics of chain reaction and ripple effect, which protracts tensions and conflicts among the players, especially between South and North Korea. Thus, this chapter focuses on how the North Korean provocation impacts the four players, and, ultimately, inter-Korean reconciliation. In order to examine the dynamics of the interaction between the four player's security relations effectively, this chapter briefly explores relative theoretical concepts for the basis of discussion: the adversary-alliance game and antagonistic interdependence. It then investigates the four players' interconnectedness (vicious cycle) and motivation for allowing conflicts (turning the cycle) within the respective theoretical framework. Finally, it verifies the implication of the interconnectedness by applying these theories, mainly on the cases of the "ROKS Cheonan" and "Bombardment of Yeonpyeong."

## **B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE ADVERSARY–ALLIANCE GAME AND THE ANTAGONISTIC DEPENDENCE**

### **1. Interdependence and Interconnectedness**

For the explanation of the interaction between states, there are two crucial concepts this paper uses: interdependence and interconnectedness between states. First, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye define interdependence as “situations characterized by reciprocal effects among countries or among actors in different countries.”<sup>187</sup> The interdependence between states is the frequently used concept in the liberal theory, which emphasizes intricately intertwined economic relations with trade. They believe the balanced or imbalanced dependence on a counterpart’s economy could spill over to the security arena positively or negatively. However, the economic interdependence does not adequately explain the positive security interdependence (i.e., between allies) and the negative security interdependence (i.e., between adversaries). As thoroughly discussed in Chapter III, alliance’s cohesion—an important connection binding allies—is determined by the degree of the interdependence on the threat and interest. Thus, it is basically a positive connection force generated from mutually virtuous relations. On the other hand, there is also negative dependence indicating tense, conflictual relations provide benefits. One can postulate that if a state’s interest depends on negative relations, the negativity tends to continue. Further details will be discussed in the following sections as a concept of *antagonistic dependence*.

The other important pillar for the interaction between states is interconnectedness. Robert Jervis defines interconnectedness as “the fates of the units and their relations with others are strongly influenced by interactions at other places and at earlier periods of time.”<sup>188</sup> In terms of security affairs, the interconnectedness means security issues and their impacts are cross-border, cross-sector, multi-stakeholder affairs. Jervis identifies interconnectedness between state’s interactions: “If relations between A and B change, so will relations between A and C and between B and C, often producing subsequent

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<sup>187</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1977), 8–9.

<sup>188</sup> Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 17.

changes in the relations between A and B.”<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, when interconnection are dense, the system is more complex, and it becomes difficult to trace the impact and hard to control. Also, because most security “systems have been designed to cope with adversity,” the extensive interconnections makes it able to prevent great disturbance. However, it also means that “disruptions could spread throughout the system,” because what happens in one place affects many others. Moreover, Jervis noted, “some arrangement of connections will make a system resistant to change”<sup>190</sup> because dense interconnectedness prevents small and slow adjustment, unless several others do.

## **2. The Adversary and Alliance Game and the Inter-Korean Reconciliation**

The most important linkages connecting and defining relations of the four players are rivalry and alliance. The directly related theory explaining the interaction between two relational linkages is Snyder’s “adversary and alliance game.” Throughout Chapter II and Chapter III, this paper explored adversary game (rivalry) and alliance game (alliance security dilemma). Briefly, the adversary game means determining whether to show firm stance or not toward adversary, whereas the alliance game means determining whether support is its ally. Beyond those separate works, Snyder found that the interconnectedness between the alliance and adversary game are:

Allies are dealing with their adversary at the same time they are dealing with each other. The alliance and adversary games proceed simultaneously and complement each other in various ways. Strategies and tactics in the alliance game will have direct effects in that game, but also side effects in the adversary game—and vice versa. Strategy choices in either game must therefore take account of both kinds of effects.<sup>191</sup>

As Snyder argues, a state’s strategic decisions cannot be excluded from either the adversary or alliance game. Simply, in the dynamics of alliance and adversary, states are interchanging influences with each other. Similar to a security dilemma, the magnitude of an alliance’s cohesion depends on the intensity of adversary’s threat; therefore, an

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>191</sup> Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” 468.

adversaries' security posture is largely determined by the threat perception derived from the rival's alliance. However, imbalance of the threat perception and interest between allies produces an asymmetric commitment, so that adversaries' response show is imbalanced with respect to alliance members. Therefore, while interchanging influence between allies and rivalries, "strategies in each game can have desirable or undesirable side effects in the other."<sup>192</sup> Snyder illustrated the interconnectedness between the adversary and alliance game and its possible consequences in Table 14. According to the theory, before choosing a strategic decision—strengthening commitment to ally or not and taking a firm stance toward adversary or not—the player should consider expansive consequences because specific policy designed to achieve “Good” may also produce unwanted “Bad” as by-products.

<b>Strategies</b>		<b>Possible Consequences</b>	
		<b>Good</b>	<b>Bad</b>
<b>I</b>	Alliance Game: <b>Strengthen Commitment</b>	1. Reduce risk of abandonment 2. Increase risk of entrapment	1. Foreclose realignment 2. Solidify adversary's alliance
	Adversary Game: <b>Strand Firm</b>	1. Deter, or Prevail over, adversary	1. Provoke adversary; increase tension; insecurity spiral
<b>II</b>	Alliance Game: <b>Weaken Commitment</b>	1. Reduce risk of entrapment 2. Restrain ally 3. Preserve realignment option 4. Divide adversary's alliance	1. Increase risk of abandonment 2. Reduce reputation for loyalty
	Adversary Game: <b>Conciliate</b>	1. Resolve conflict; reduce tension	1. Encourage adversary to stand firmer 2. Reduce reputation for resolve

Table 14. The Composite Dilemma in a Multipolar System<sup>193</sup>

From the theory, the most notable dilemmas it can draw out for the inter-Korean reconciliation are that either the firm or the conciliatory stance is difficult to achieve respective to the original purpose—deterrence and reconciliation. Firstly, augmenting military capabilities and the strengthening alliances may deter an adversary, but can be read by it as an offensive measure designed to undermine its own security, thereby encouraging it to take countermeasures. Then, it may further trigger a general upward

<sup>192</sup> Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 470.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 469.

spiraling of tensions and insecurities—“that is, a vicious circle of unnecessary power competition.”<sup>194</sup> On the other hand, the escalated tension raises the entrapment fears of its ally and become a friction which prevents commitment to the alliance. In the same vein, a conciliatory policy and weakening commitment to an alliance may help resolve conflict and appease tensions with an adversary, but also it could encourage him to take advantage from weak resoluteness.<sup>195</sup> Furthermore, it raises abandonment fears from the ally, so that it also works as friction to suspend commitment to it. As shown in Table 14, under the alliance and adversary game, any unilateral policy produces paradoxical situations for the inter-Korean reconciliation in which the desirable and undesirable effects coexist.

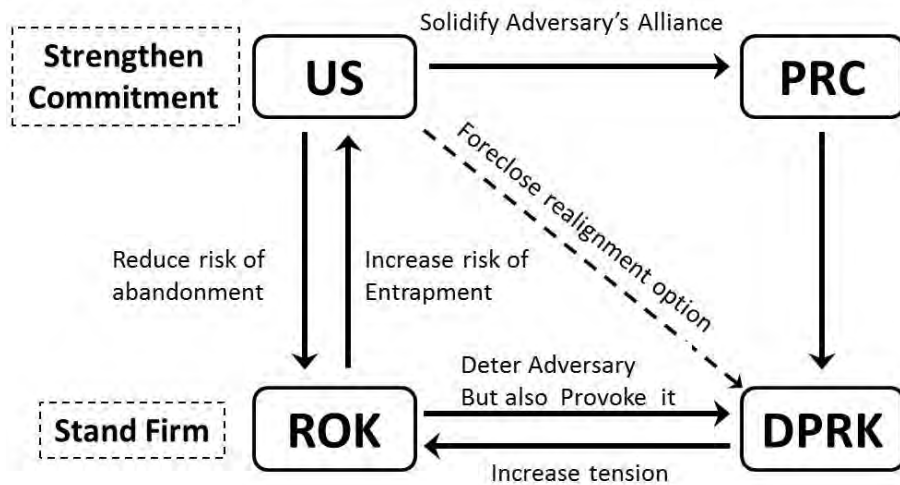


Figure 7. Applied the Composite Dilemma (Case I) on the Four Players

As a representative example, if it applies Case I (in Table 14) to the configuration of four players' game on the Peninsula, the possible feature will be like Figure 7. The figure illustrates the case that the ROK takes strong stance toward the DPRK while receiving strong commitment from the U.S. Despite the abbreviate form, it well shows the interconnectedness of the policy choices of the U.S.-ROK, the reaction of the PRC-DPRK, and paradoxical problem faced by taking respective strategy. From such

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 469.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 470.

interconnected configuration, it can postulate that any four player's strategic movement toward alliance and adversary generates desirable effects and undesirable effects for alliance, adversary and inter-Korean reconciliation.

## **2. The Antagonistic Interdependence**

As noted preceding section, the other important source for states' interaction is interdependence. This paper investigates negative dependency (from now on *antagonistic dependence*) seeking benefits from conflictual relations, tension and mutual hostility that would protract conflict and tension between the four players, especially the two Koreas. This section finds two types of antagonistic dependences: dependence of the four players on conflict between ally and its rival and dependence of Kim Jung-Il regime and South Korean conservatives on mutual hostility.

### ***a. Antagonistic Dependence on Partner's Conflictual Relations***

In Chapter III, this paper previously explored the positive dependence between allies. The ally's dependence is the main factor determining cohesiveness of an alliance, so that "when mutual dependence is high, the alliance will be cohesive; when it is low, the alliance will be fragile."<sup>196</sup> In other words, the dependence in the alliance works to bind states within a security framework and influences its strategic movement. On the other hand, basically, the existence and cohesiveness of the alliance are dependent on the threat. In other words, paradoxically, threat helps to sustain the alliance.

However, when an alliance shares sole or symmetric, mutual threats, allies may not have friction to strengthen a commitment toward alliance, as threat surges or dissolves the alliance as threat weakens. Thus, in this case, the allies' security problem and solution is consistent so that there is no antagonistic dependence between them. However, if an alliance shares an asymmetric threat perception, allies will confront an alliance security dilemma and have friction to execute respective security policy toward their primary threats. Therefore, in order to draw out commitment from the partner in this case, a state needs to make its primary adversary to its ally's main threat also, or the

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<sup>196</sup> Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 31.



partner has its own conflict in retaining the necessity of the alliance's assistance. In other words, the conflictual situation in which the partner needs alliance capability will increase its counterpart's leverage over the ally so that it helps to execute its primary security policy. That is, the state becomes dependent on the partner's conflict for seeking its security.

In the case of the four players, the two sets of alliance coalitions and rivalries with asymmetric threat perception and different level of interests produce paradoxical dependence between them. For example, the ROK needs alliance against the North Korean conventional military rather than the potential PRC threat or the North Korean WMD. However, the U.S.'s necessity of the alliance more lied on the PRC and North Korean WMD rather than the North Korean conventional military. This asymmetry of threat generates divergent dependence and policy priorities between the U.S. and ROK. Basically in this case, both countries need the counterpart's confrontation with their respective rivalries to maintain the alliance for respective security reason. If one party's threat perception declines while the other party's threat is remaining, the alliance becomes dependent on the former one's conflict to sustain it. In other words, these asymmetric dependencies on the threat perception produce the antagonistic dependence, which refers to the situation in which four players depend on tensions or confrontations between its ally and ally's rivalry, and then use such situations to tighten the alliance, raise its strategic status or counter its primary rivalry.

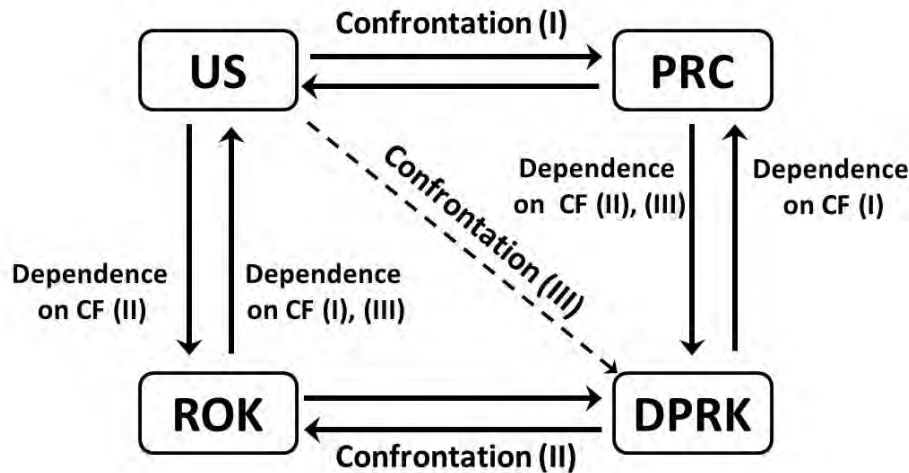


Figure 8. Antagonistic Dependence between the Four Players

Figure 8 illustrates the antagonistic dependence between four players on the partner's confrontation to have leverage over respective allies and maintain the alliance. The signs on the figure refer to each confrontation and dependence (Confrontation (I): the U.S.–PRC rivalry, Confrontation (II): the ROK–DPRK, Confrontation (III): the U.S.–DPRK WMD issue) of the four players. In this situation, if the alliance partner's tension do not cost too much for the involvement, each of the four players would gain benefits from the alliance partner's tension with respect to their adversary game, especially when its risk of abandonment is high. For example, in 1976, when the abandonment fear prevailed in South Korea, the axe murder incident—North Korean soldiers killed two U.S. army officers in the Joint Security Area (JSA)—paradoxically helped Seoul to be reassured by the U.S.'s firm stance to the North Korean attack.<sup>197</sup> While providing strong commitment to the U.S., the atmosphere in the ROK seemed to welcome such opportunity to support the U.S.

The ROK was generally satisfied with the apparent outcome of the crisis according to one account, and particularly pleased with the [task force part of the] operation and their participation in it. The immediate deployment of U.S. forces to Korea...impressed the South Koreans with the sincerity of the US commitment to the ROK. In the streets, the solid bond between

<sup>197</sup> Keith Payne, Thomas Scheber, and Kuft Guthe, *U.S. Extended Deterrence and Assurance for Allies in Northeast Asia* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2010), 18.

Americans and their Korean hosts grew even stronger. All of South Korea realized that they had witnessed a rare event in which they had played a key part—North Korea had lost face in the world’s eyes.<sup>198</sup>

Even though the incident brought the crisis into the peninsula, for Seoul, such moderate level of tension between the U.S. and its adversary helped the ROK to guarantee the commitment from the U.S. without costing too much.

***b. Antagonistic Interdependence Between South and North Korea***

Another important dependence linkage is the South and North Korean antagonistic interdependence, derived from the distinctive characteristics of the shared dual identities between two Koreas (as a state and as a same ethnicity). As examined in Chapter II, the dual identity generates the incompatible legitimacy competition between two Koreas. From the same ethnic and nationalistic perspective, both Koreas acknowledge the reunification as the ultimate goal, but it is a problem for the state identity because the counterpart can be an alternative political system substituting respective regimes. Thus, the two Koreas inherently compete with each other for the sole legitimacy and political system in the peninsula. Under the division structure, both Koreas are pursuing contradictive objectives that regard “division as an important means for maintaining political power while paradoxically, stressing incessantly the importance of unification almost as a matter of course.”<sup>199</sup>

The division structure in which both Koreas share the same ethnic identity but have antithetic political entities has created unique dynamics and interdependence. Within the Cold War framework, as incompatible rivalries, both Koreas had established its identity through comparing with the other’s behavior and seeing itself reflected from action and reaction of the counterpart (*mirror image effect*), so called “*interfacial*

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<sup>198</sup> Col. Conrad DeLateur, *Murder at Panmunjom: The Role of the Theater Commander in Crisis Resolution*, research paper for the Department of State Foreign Service Institute Senior Seminar (Rosslyn, VA.: Foreign Service Institute, March 1987), 24.

<sup>199</sup> Yi, *Developmental Dictatorship and the Park Chung-Hee Era: The Shaping of Modernity in the Republic of Korea*, 215.

*dynamics.*”<sup>200</sup> Thus, both Korea’s influences are mutually entangled while building respective nation, excluding physically, and embracing identically the other at the same time. Thus, choosing any security and foreign policy influenced the behavior of the other side, and then it returned to itself. This “*interfacial*” relationship has produced the paradoxical coexistence and dependence between the antagonistic authoritarian regimes and conservative factions in both countries, so called the “*antagonistic interdependent relations*” or “*symbiotic antagonism*.”<sup>201</sup> In the antagonistic interdependent relations, the counterpart’s antagonistic existence helped the two Korea’s to intensify “domestic” integration, thus the “relational” antagonism has been the desired element to some extent to the conservative factions in domestic politics. In short, the two Korea’s confrontation has generated paradoxical dynamics of deterrence and dependence on antagonism.

In this context, the South and the North have created tensions or engineered confrontations against their counterpart and then used the resultant situation to strengthen domestic unity and enhance the integration, legitimacy or stabilization of political power.<sup>202</sup> Nevertheless, the antagonistic interdependence exists today between the Kim Jong-Il regime and the South’s conservative parties most opposing North Korea. Antagonistic rhetoric is commonly found in North Korean statements for the purpose of tightening its domestic unity, whereas, in South Korean domestic politics, the “communist rhetoric” still prevailed in the society. Indeed, the conservative parties receive reflective benefits from North Korean hostilities and provocations because these raise its political status and justification for security policy. In this respect, regulating tight vigilance helps not only to repel a counterpart’s hostility but also sustain a counterpart’s regime and strengthen the conservative faction’s status. As one of the representative examples, the *Chongpoong* (Gun Wind) case became a sensitive issue during the presidential election campaign in 1997 in that the conservative party’s few

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<sup>200</sup> Park, “The Structure and Changes in the Order of Division,” 41–79

<sup>201</sup> Lee, “the Inter-Korean relations and Domestic Politics in the post-Cold War period,.”

<sup>202</sup> Lee Chong-suk, 22.

officials asked Pyongyang to provoke armed demonstration in order to lead the favorable election.<sup>203</sup>

### **C. THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF THE CONFRONTATION TRIGGERED BY NORTH KOREAN PROVOCATIONS**

The interconnectedness and antagonistic dependence between four players produce the vicious cycle of the strained relations triggering chain reactions when negative security problems occur. The relational linkages between the four players—rivalry and alliance—provide interconnectedness and a route allowing influence to spread out, but these four are intertwined with antagonistic dependence entrenching the problems and straining relations. Generally, the DPRK is the main source of trouble, causing most of problems throughout the region. During past two decades, the other players seem to be embedded in the North Korean issue but could not generate viable solutions to restrain Pyongyang or even reach consensus for cooperation to prevent struggles within them. However, the crisis triggered by the DPRK often provides benefit not only to itself but also to the other players, to some extent. This section discusses for what reasons Pyongyang continuously seeks to provoke and why such ruthless provocation is allowed among other players.

#### **1. The Linkages of the Vicious Cycle**

According to the adversary and alliance game (as illustrated Figure 7), problems caused by Pyongyang have ripple effects. Typically, North Korean provocation can be distinguished into the two categories: the conventional military provocation (bilateral level) and WMD provocation (regional level). Because these issues have different influence radius, impacts triggered by North Korean provocations tend to follow different consecutive routes. Figure 9 and 10 postulate the most typical situation for the four players, when North Korea causes conventional military provocation and WMD provocations. Whether Pyongyang's intension is to receive economical support, draw out recession in the security affairs or strengthen its internal unity, the further influence of the

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<sup>203</sup> Jung Wei-yong, "the Supreme court give guilty verdict to 'Chongpoong 3 gangs' for the requesting the armed demonstration," *Don-a Ilbo*, September 26, 2003, accessed November 15, 2011, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=100&oid=020&aid=0000207165>

provocation depends on the other players' responses to it. Figure 9 shows how the cycle of the negative impacts circulates into the four players. In this diagram, if each state chooses ① option, it will triggers a following reaction from the next relationally linked player, whereas choosing ② option stops the further spread of the ripple effect.

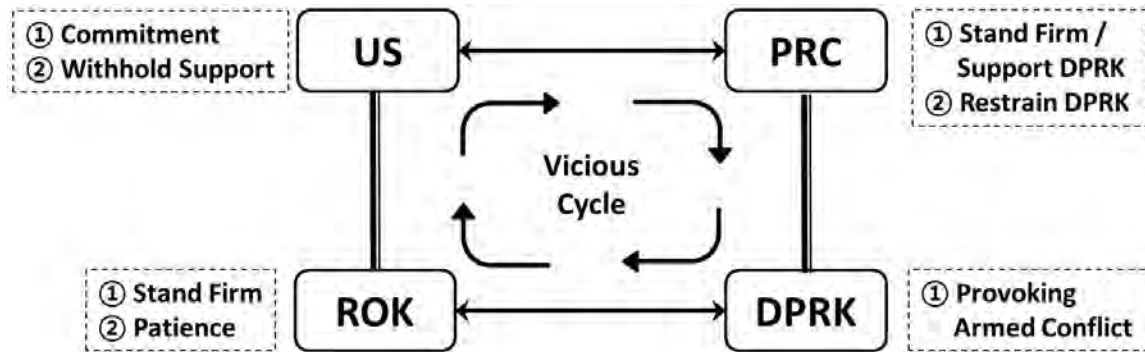


Figure 9. Vicious Cycle Triggered by Conventional Military Provocation

In simplistic terms for the vicious cycle of Figure 9, if Pyongyang provokes armed conflict toward the South, then Seoul will take firm countermeasures toward the North, and the inter-Korean relations will be strained. As the ally is attacked, the U.S. provides political and military assistance to Seoul and takes all possible measures to suppress Pyongyang. While strengthening commitment, the U.S.–ROK alliance becomes more tightened, and Washington's influence on the peninsula increases, but it means jeopardizing the Beijing's strategic status. Then, the PRC will seek possible measures to counterbalance the U.S.'s increased influence. As part of the countermeasures, Beijing also strengthens ties with the DPRK by providing support and protection. With the increased safety and raised strategic status, Pyongyang can deviate from its responsibility for the provocation and acquire room for the next provocation.

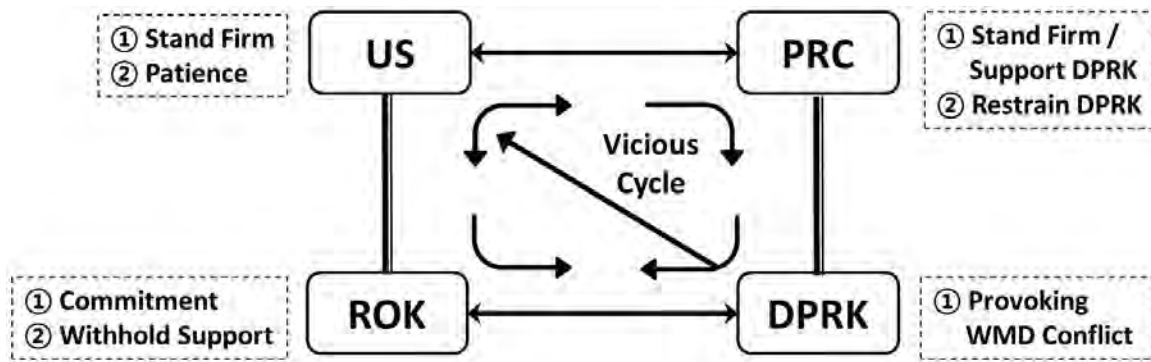


Figure 10. Vicious Cycle Triggered by WMD Provocation

On the other hand, the North Korean WMD provocation has a somewhat different process in comparison to the conventional military provocation. Because of its regional level impacts, the provocation directly stimulates the U.S. rather than the ROK. Thus, in the process of problem solving, the U.S. gets directly involved in the North Korean issue, and seeks deterrence measures and international cooperation, especially from the ROK. In the face of U.S. pressure, the PRC would response similarly to the conventional provocation case—support and protect—and the DPRK also would get similar effects from the provocation. Under the U.S. demand, the ROK should decide whether it participates in the U.S.-led sanctions or not. If it participates, the inter-Korean relations are further strained. However, the notable thing is that the ROK's position to North Korean WMD provocation is not the biggest determinant in this cycle because, even if Seoul does not takes part in the sanction, the strained U.S –PRC rivalry continuously turns the cycle.

## 2. The Forces (Motivations) Turning the Vicious Cycle

As noted, all four players have veto power. If each player chooses ② option, the vicious cycle tends to hold on the stage without further spiral—except the ROK's choice in case of a North Korean WMD provocation. Generally, in the Chapter II, this paper discussed possible reasons for the four players to stop the spiral reactions. On the other hand, the four players also have the motivation to allow some level of tension in the

peninsula when it fits their respective interests, as suggested in this chapter regarding antagonistic dependence.

*a. The ROK's Antagonistic Dependence*

As examined in Chapter II, the strained relations between rivalries and the sustaining tension significantly reduce the possibility of improvement in the inter-Korean relations. Thus, the deteriorated U.S.–PRC relationship would be the great barrier to South Korean engagement policy toward the North. For this reason, there had been diverse discussions among the ROK policy makers about its role for the mediation in the U.S.–PRC relations. Most importantly, the Roh Moo-hyun administration actively sought the role of “balancer” to mediate the U.S.–PRC relations to prevent conflicts between them, but it died on the vine with the conservative party’s opposition and lack of capability to mediate two great powers. Also, the concerns about the future of the U.S.–ROK alliance among conservatives in Seoul and Washington frustrated President Roh’s autonomous security policy.

On the other hand, the tension—the strained U.S.–PRC rivalry—provides benefits to the ROK to some extent. Besides that, South Korean conservatives get reflective benefits from North Korean hostility due to its ironic symbiotic relations with Kim Jong-Il regime; the U.S.–PRC rivalry raises the strategic importance of the ROK while being in the middle of two great powers, as security reinforcement for the U.S. and counter-relations for the PRC. Thus, the more the U.S.–PRC rivalry deepens, the more the ROK has an increased strategic status. Even though the conflict of interests between the U.S. and PRC restricts the freedom of action of the ROK, it also helps not to be dominated by either of the two great powers.

From the liberal theorist perspective, the deepening economic interdependence of the Northeast Asian security environment “has greatly increased the opportunity cost of conducting war for most of the countries in the region, and military options have become a much less attractive tool to resolve disputes.”<sup>204</sup> However,

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<sup>204</sup> Mataka Kamiya, “Hopeful Uncertainty: Asia-Pacific Security in Transition,” *Asia-Pacific Review* 3, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1996): 114.



interdependence does not necessarily have to be “evenly balanced mutual dependence”<sup>205</sup> because “the distribution of these benefits across states is often unequal.”<sup>206</sup> The asymmetry provides one state more leverage over another. Thus, closely tied economic relationship can lead a weak state to become more dependent and vulnerable. Similarly, as discussed about relative dependence and fear of abandonment in Chapter III, the asymmetric security dependence also produces imbalanced influence toward ally. In this respect to the asymmetric interdependence, the ROK seems to greatly depend on the U.S. in the security aspect and the PRC in the economic aspect. However, the improved strategic status—derived from the U.S.–PRC rivalry—enables the ROK to maintain its voice and strategic independence. Also, the competition between the U.S. and the PRC toward the ROK provides Seoul reflective interests. For example, the improved economic relations between the PRC and ROK triggered the U.S. to proceed with the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the ROK as counter economic relations. However, the treaty between the U.S. and ROK pushed the PRC to have another FTA with the ROK. As a result of the rivalry, the ROK could have an advantageous position for the treaty.<sup>207</sup> In other words, the ROK gained benefits from the tension, to some extent, from the North Korean provocation.

***b. The U.S.’s Antagonistic Dependence***

In a similar context, the U.S. also gains benefits from the ROK–DPRK conflict. As its relative influence declined in Northeast Asia, the strategic necessity of the ROK become indispensable, but the ROK showed contradictive movement to its wish with the economic development and relative superiority toward the North. However, the moderate level of North Korean provocation provides essential justification for the U.S. to intervene in the peninsula and tighten the U.S.–ROK alliance with the request of the ROK. At the same time, the U.S. can have amplified influence, which would draw the ROK into the U.S.-led security frames, such as sanctions toward the North, PSI, and

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<sup>205</sup> Keohane and Nye, 8.

<sup>206</sup> Mochizuki, 6.

<sup>207</sup> Uk Heo, “The US-ROK Alliance: Security Implications of the South Korea—US Free Trade Agreement,” *Pacific Focus* XXIII, no.3 (December 2008): 365–381.

possibly the U.S.–Japan–ROK trilateral alliance. Also, Washington exploits the tension to press Beijing indirectly in the context of the balancing strategy. In other words, the inter-Korean conflict can solve its fear of abandonment without significant entrapment problems in the conflict. Because of that, in extreme terms, “it may be that Washington neither wants Pyongyang to take radical actions to undermine the US-led strategic pattern in Northeast Asia nor does it want the Korean Peninsula to be too stable.”<sup>208</sup> It would be beneficial for the U.S. to maintain a controllable tension on the peninsula to justify the continuing presence of its troops in terms of securing the U.S.–ROK alliance.<sup>209</sup>

*c. The PRC’s Antagonistic Dependence*

Although the DPRK problem often seems to run the PRC into problem, Beijing also gains some benefits from the moderate level of Pyongyang-initiated tensions. First, the PRC enjoys North Korea’s direct confrontation with the U.S. For Beijing, which has the limited position for criticizing against the U.S., the DPRK provocation could take a proxy role; this would deliver the PRC’s intention toward the U.S. without deteriorating its international reputation and direct confrontation with the U.S. Second, conflicts between the U.S. and DPRK reduce the possibility of rapprochement between them, so that Beijing does not need to concern itself about the DPRK defection with its increased dependence on Beijing. Also, to some level, the U.S.–DPRK conflict helps alienate South Korean citizens (progressive) from the U.S.–ROK alliance because it appears that the U.S.’s approach often obscures the inter-Korean reconciliation to South Korean. Furthermore, as a sole ally for Pyongyang, North Korean provocation raises the importance of Beijing’s role in the process of problem solving. As the crisis continues, the PRC becomes even more indispensable as a mediator, “the voice of reason to whom the world looks up to as the best hope to control both its unpredictable neighbor and an America whom they view as impetuous.”<sup>210</sup> Also, by insisting on the solution within the

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<sup>208</sup> Debin Zhan, “Beyond the Hostility,” 37.

<sup>209</sup> Harmid Ur-Rehman, “The Korean Peninsula: Peaceful Engagement for Humanitarian Concerns,” *NTS-Asia Research Paper* No.3, (2010), 1–31.

<sup>210</sup> Narayanan Komerath and Jose Gonzalez, “A New Dawn for Korea,” *Strategic Research Review* 1, no.2 (January 2005), 13.

multilateral framework, the PRC can lead the negotiation and draw out the most suitable situation meeting its interests, while minimizing the influence of the U.S., Japan, and Russia in the Korean issues. Therefore, although the PRC has no explicit intention having a conflict in the peninsula, it “may not mind having its proxy keep the pot stirred, just below ignition point.”<sup>211</sup>

*d. The DPRK's Antagonistic Dependence*

The Kim Jung-Il regime will be the largest beneficiary of its own provocations. Although Pyongyang may lose the economic assistance from the South and face U.S.-led sanctions, the conflict itself provides the important justification to tighten the domestic unity and establish the legitimacy of the succession process by creating a consciousness of crisis. Beyond the impacts on the North Korean society, the provocation generates two imperative implications: increased strategic status and exploitation of the other three players' wedged stance. First similar to the South Korean case, Pyongyang can enjoy its raised strategic value after its provocation strained the U.S.–PRC rivalry. With respect to the tension between the two great powers, the DPRK is regarded as an indispensable partner for the PRC to counterbalance the U.S., so that it retains its value as an ally that continuously receives assistance from China. Although Beijing does not provide full support, with that, Pyongyang can deviate the threat of suspensions in the South's economic assistance and the U.S.-led sanctions, enabling it to be free from disturbing effects of the Sunshine policy spreading into the society. Also, ironically, its raised strategic value for the PRC can be a significant negotiation card for the U.S. In return for the security guarantee or WMD program, the DPRK could trade its relations with China. Second, Pyongyang can exploit the wedge—produced by the provocation—between the three players. Because of the different perspective of the U.S., ROK, and PRC toward the North Korean issue, it is difficult for them to have consistent policies to press Pyongyang to forsake the nuclear arsenal and further troubles. Also, between these divergent policies, Pyongyang can negotiate each of the players in its own terms. In other words, the freed-from-punishment and inconsistent policies basically do not restrain the

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

DPRK's strategic options but, instead, allow it to pursue its nuclear program and continue brinkmanship tactics.

#### **D. CASE STUDY: VICIOUS CYCLE OF THE CONVENTIONAL MILITARY PROVOCATION (YENPYONG INCIDENT AND CHUNAN SINKING)**

With the combination of the interconnectedness and the antagonistic dependence behind the four players' strategic interest, the North Korean provocation tends to produce a vicious cycle of the confrontation, even though further reaction largely depends on each player's decision. For the sake of brevity, this section discusses only the major North Korean conventional military provocations since the Kim Dae Jung administration.

Almost always, the Pyongyang's conventional military provocation aims at Seoul. In response to provocations, Seoul basically has two options to deal with the problems. First, it can show the firm resolution and take a tit-for-tat strategy in order to deter further provocation. The other possible option is enduring the provocations and sustaining the conciliatory attitude toward the North with patience in order to eliminate side effects of strained relations. According to Figure 11, when Seoul chooses the second option, the influence of the provocation tends to have limited effects within the peninsula. Although the provocation will shake the South Korean domestic public opinion and politics, if Seoul does not take it to the international community, the tension would not get attention from neighboring countries, and would be constrained in the bilateral level. On the other hand, if Seoul chooses the first option and takes problems into the international stage, its response produces spiral reactions toward the U.S. and PRC.

##### **1. Cases: Provocations but Limited Regional Impacts**

The Kim Dae Jung administration had experienced two major North Korean armed provocations—the first and second “Battle of Yeonpyeong” (June 15, 1999, and June 29, 2002)—while persistently taking the conciliatory policy towards Pyongyang. Both incidents were initiated by North Korean gunships crossing the Northern Limit Line (NLL).<sup>212</sup> In the first clash, the ROK had more favorable military results than the DPRK,

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<sup>212</sup> Terence Roehrig, “Korean Dispute over the Northern Limit Line: Security, Economics, or International Law?,” *Maryland Series in Contemporary Asian Studies*: 2008: no. 3, . 12–21.

generally due to comparatively fewer casualties and damages (ROK: 2 boats slightly damaged and 9 wounded, DPRK: 1 torpedo boat sunk, 3 boats patrol boats severely damaged, 17-30 killed).<sup>213</sup> Although the U.S. dispatched additional naval forces to South Korea in support to suppress further reaction from the North, the response was largely limited because of Kim and the Clinton administration's engagement policy toward Pyongyang. In the context of the limited damage and conciliatory policy, the first battle's impact had been retained in the Korean Peninsula. Even after the battle, the Kim administration enhanced the rules of engagement to avoid armed clashes and avoid stimulating the North.

This political basis had been maintained in the second clash even though the ROK navy received relatively greater damages than that of the first crisis (ROK: 1 patrol boat sunk, 6 killed, 18 wounded, DPRK: 1 patrol boat severely damaged, 13 killed, 25 wounded).<sup>214</sup> Nevertheless, President Kim did not waive the "Sunshine Policy" by the provocation while calling for restraint. Thus, the impact of the battle also limited in the bilateral level, while the relations between Washington and Pyongyang severely deteriorated since September 11, 2001. In other words, the choice not to seek expanded reaction restrained the impact on the peninsula and prevented external powers' influence on the inter-Korean issue. From a conventional military aspect, the inter-Korean relations had been stable for eight years, until 2009, without conventional military provocation, whereas the nuclear issue became worse problem in the regional level.

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 12–16.

<sup>214</sup> Roehrig, 17–21.

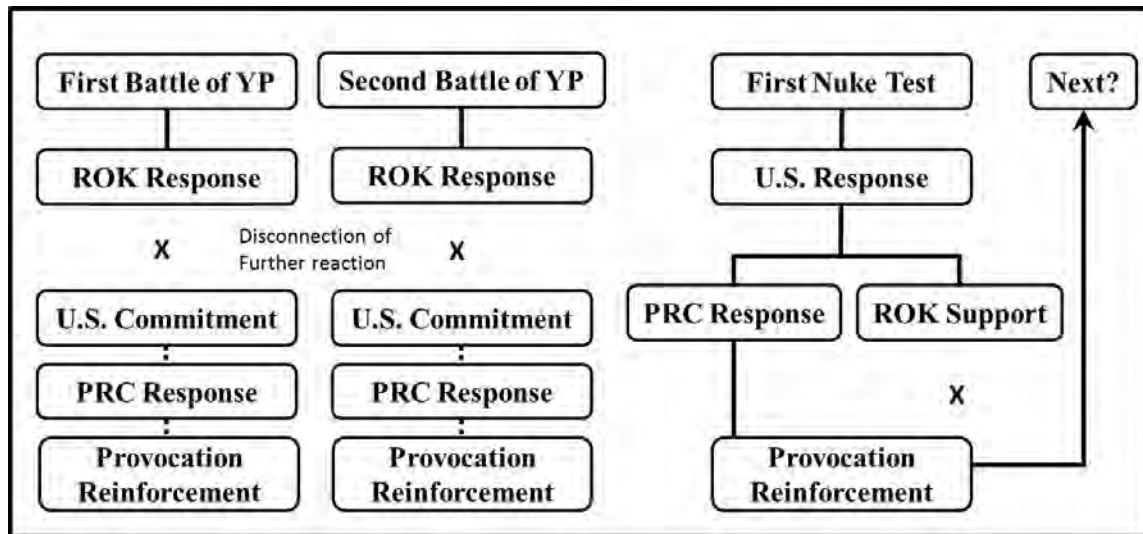


Figure 11. Limited Chain Reaction during the Two Navy Battles

However, even though such patient and conciliatory policy prevented further reaction to the incident from spreading toward neighboring states, Seoul could not prevent subsequent North Korean nuclear crises and the strained U.S.–Pyongyang–PRC relations. Also, it faced significant U.S. pressure to participate in their security initiatives. In other words, because the nuclear program triggered the regional level of conflict, Seoul’s effort to embrace North Korean hostility and prevent strained external player’s relations had limited achievement. Moreover, the both incidents, along with the North Korean nuclear program, had a significant negative influence on the engagement politics. These greatly deteriorated public opinion toward the Sunshine Policy and provided significant political basis and justification to the conservative party. Also, discussions concerning the unity of the U.S.–ROK alliance rose inside conservative factions, and even the center-left was losing its patience toward the North Korean hostility (as illustrated in Figure 12). Later, it became one of the essential foundations for President Lee Myung-bak to be able to win the election and make policy changes.

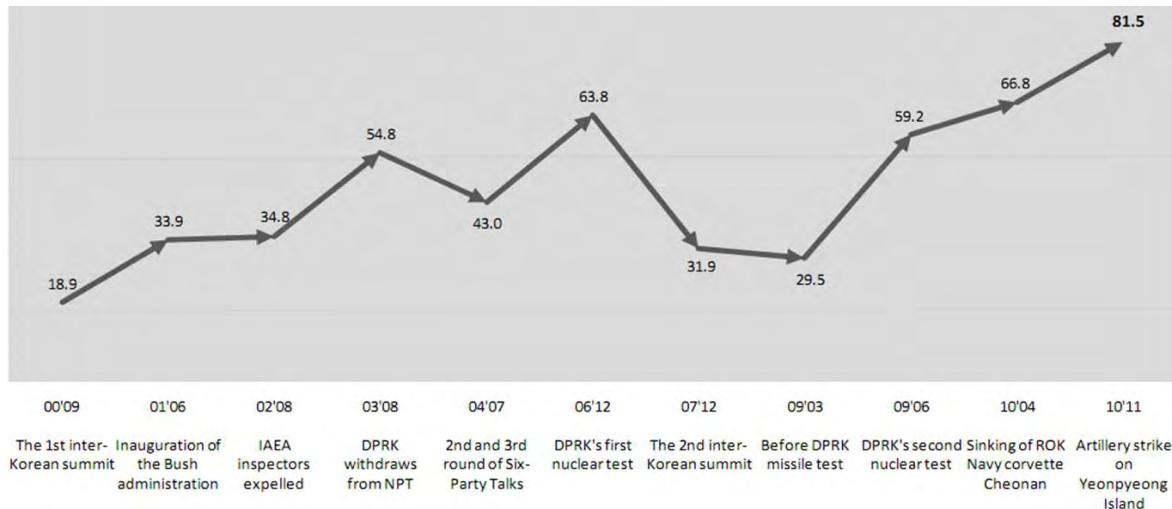


Figure 12. Percentage of South Koreans' Concerns of Insecurity.<sup>215</sup>

## 2. Cases: ROKS Cheonan Sinking and Bombardment of Yeonpyeong

On the other hand, since the inauguration of the conservative government—the Lee Myung-bak administration, which taking a tough stance against North Korean provocation and emphasizing on the U.S–ROK alliance—the conventional military provocation became more regional issue drawing other players into the inter-Korean conflicts. Besides “Battle of Daecheong” (October 9, 2009), which had limited damages (ROK: 1 patrol boat slightly damaged), two major incidents in 2010—“ROK Ship Cheonan” and “Bombardment of Yeonpyeong”—brought significant regional impacts, and turned the vicious cycle of the confrontation as illustrated Figure 13.

The “ROKS Cheonan sinking” incident occurred on March 26, 2010, and killed 46 seamen in the Yellow Sea.<sup>216</sup> The Joint Civilian-Military Investigative Group (JIG)—consisting of 25 experts from South Korea and 24 foreign experts mainly from Western countries—concluded that the ship was attacked by a North Korean torpedo launched from a midget submarine.<sup>217</sup> Although Pyongyang denied all responsibility and suggested

<sup>215</sup> Nae-young Lee and Han-wool Jeong, “The Impact of North Korea’s Artillery Strike on Public Opinion in South Korea,” *Issue Briefing on Public Opinion*, no 91 (December 2010), 1.

<sup>216</sup> Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt, *China and Inter-Korean Clashes in the Yellow Sea*, Asia Report N°200. Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2011.

<sup>217</sup> Investigation Result on the Sinking of ROKS “Cheonan”, The Joint Civilian-Military Investigation Group, 20 May 2010.

evidence about the attack, the incident dramatically strained the inter-Korean relations and became the beginning of the vicious cycle of confrontation, which brought significant regional impact. Furthermore, on November 23, 2010, only eight months after the sinking of Cheonan, Pyongyang launched an artillery barrage on Yeonpyeong Island, killing two civilians and two marines. It was the first artillery engagement since the Korean War that was initiated by the North, following South Korea's regular live-fire exercise.<sup>218</sup> The ROK Marines K-9 self-propelled artillery also bravely counterfired 80 shells against North Korean gun positions while receiving around 170 rounds.<sup>219</sup> This incident further escalated tension between the two Koreas. The South's focus of the security response moved from prevention of escalation to retaliation, and it also brought an explicit conflict of security interest and agreement between two great powers.

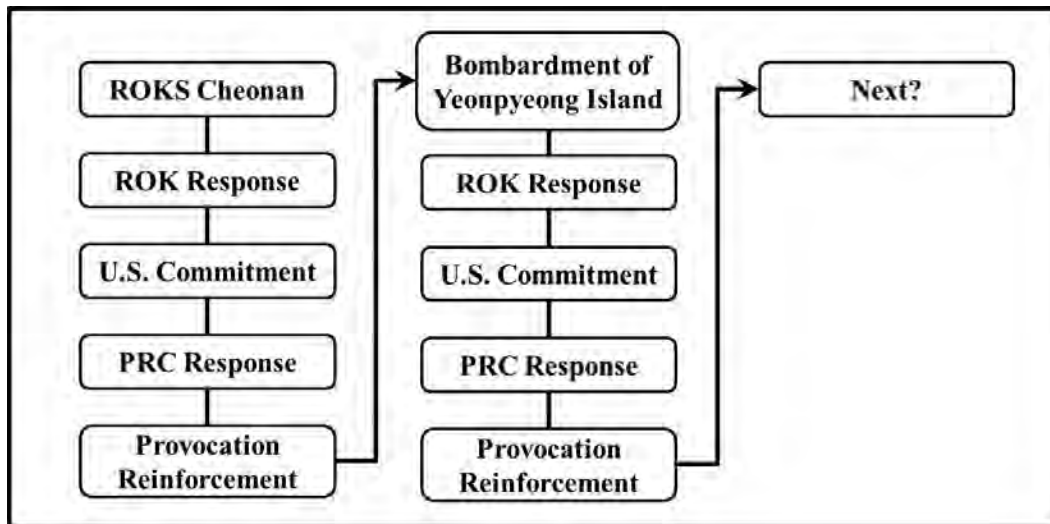


Figure 13. Chain Reactions during the Two Incidents in 2010.

#### *a. The ROK Response*

After the sinking of Cheonan, the Lee administration was actively seeking “resolute countermeasures” toward the North’s ruthless provocation in order to deter and

<sup>218</sup> Stephanie, 5–7.

<sup>219</sup> The CNN Wire Staff, “After North Korean strike, South Korean leader threatens 'retaliation',” *CNN*, November 24, 2010, accessed November 28, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/asiapcf/11/23/nkorea.skorea.military.fire/index.html?hpt=T1&ieref=BN1>



retaliate with the tit-for-tat strategy. The countermeasures can be roughly categorized into three responses: disconnection of cooperation with the North, seeking international cooperation for pressure, and strengthening the U.S.–ROK alliance. In response to the provocation, Seoul canceled and suspended the extensive reconciliatory projects established by the former progressive government during past ten years. First, it considered readopting the official description of “the North is the main enemy,” resuming psychological warfare against the North, minimizing the South-North economic cooperation (i.e., reducing labors in the Kaesong Industrial Park), suspending inter-Korean trade and assistance, banning North Korean ships in the South’s waters, etc.<sup>220</sup>

Second, Seoul mounted an international campaign for tough action against the North. President Lee urged “strong international cooperation” to deal with Pyongyang when referring the incident to the Security Council on June 4, 2010, in order for “resolute countermeasures” and strengthened economic sanctions.<sup>221</sup> In order to adopt the statement denouncing the North, Seoul tried to expand international cooperation along with Washington, and ask Beijing to take a stronger stance toward the North. However, although Seoul succeeded in drawing out an agreement, “the Security Council condemns the attack which led to the sinking of the Cheonan.” In the statement, it failed to refer the attacker to North Korea due to Beijing’s refusal to take any condemnation toward Pyongyang. It became the “disappointing and weak” statement, which is “condemning the act but not an aggressor.”<sup>222</sup>

Third, as the most significant response to the mounting tension and fears of conflict on the Korean Peninsula, Seoul sought to strengthen the U.S.–ROK alliance in order to demonstrate the firm readiness for provocations. As the mark of solidarity and strength of the alliance, Seoul took part in the U.S.-led military exercises and sanctions aimed at Pyongyang. For example, the ROK navy formally agreed to work closer

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<sup>220</sup> Evan Buxbaum, “U.N. Security Council to condemn sinking,” *CNN*, July 08, 2010, accessed November 28, 2011, [http://articles.cnn.com/2010-07-08/world/un.korean.ship\\_1\\_cheonan-security-council-duk-yong?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-07-08/world/un.korean.ship_1_cheonan-security-council-duk-yong?_s=PM:WORLD)

<sup>221</sup> Stephanie, 4.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

together in joint anti-submarine exercises. In July, the ROK and U.S. naval forces—including the American aircraft carrier USS George Washington—conducted a joint military exercise in the East Sea (7. 25–28). Also, South Korea hosted a Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) exercise simulating interdiction of ships carrying illegal weapons (10.1–14), which was avoided during the progressive governments. Furthermore, after the bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island, the U.S. and ROK had joint military exercises in the West Sea, including USS George Washington (11.28–12.1). Then, Seoul carried out further live-fire artillery exercise at Yeonpyeong Island—the North’s original excuse for the provocation—while being backed by the U.S.

***b. The U.S. Commitment to the ROK***

In the face of the North Korean provocations, the U.S. fully provided unequivocal political and military support to the ROK. Washington supported “President Lee’s handling of the crisis and the objective investigation that followed the sinking of the Cheonan and furthermore, that the ROK could count on the unwavering support from the United States.” Indeed, the provocations created favorable condition for the U.S.–ROK alliance because it greatly contributed to the change of South Korean public perception toward the North and the U.S., so that it worked to strengthen the alliance.

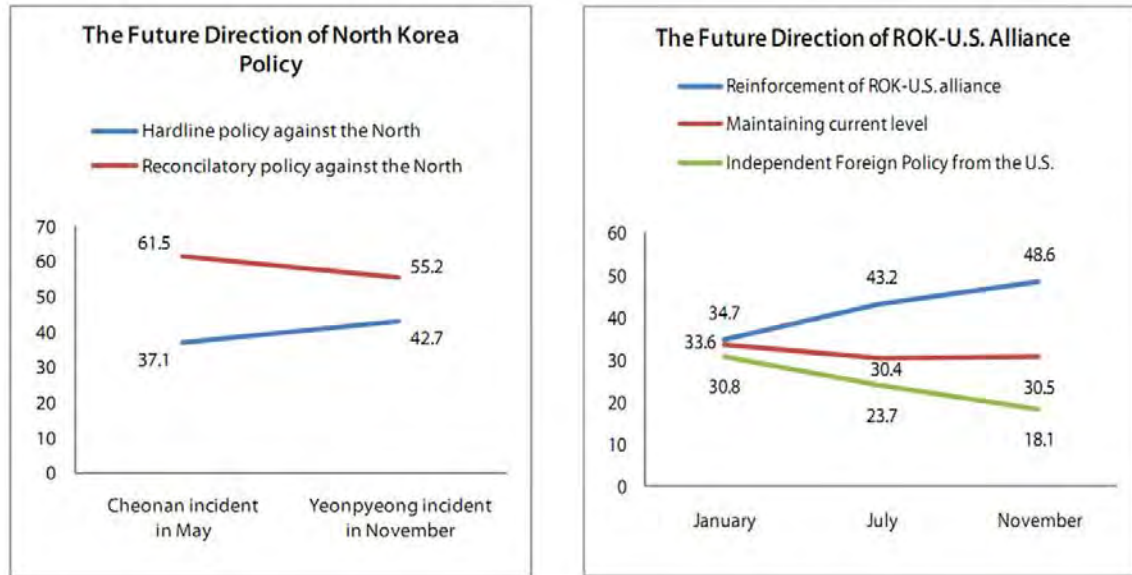


Figure 14. Public Opinion toward North Korea and the United States<sup>223</sup>

As illustrated in Figure 14, while going through the two incidents, respondents who supported the strengthening the U.S.–ROK alliance increased by 8.5% points to 43.2%, whereas respondents who supported independent foreign policy had dropped to 23.7%. Similarly, the relative numbers of respondents who supported the hard-line policy generally increased. Based upon the changed perception, the incidents triggered diverse discussions not only for the incident but also the strengthening the U.S.–ROK alliance.<sup>224</sup> As one of the major turning points in alliance history, Seoul and Washington held a “two plus two” meeting between their respective foreign and defense ministers for the first time since the beginning of their relations. The representative agreements on the meeting are:

- (1) reaffirmation to meet any and all North Korean threats; (2) completion of a new plan, the Strategic Alliance 2015 by this year’s Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) including the transition of wartime operational control (OPCON) to the ROK military by December 2015; (3) reaffirmation of the earlier joint condemnation of North Korea for the sinking of the Cheonan; (4) urging North Korea to abandon all nuclear

<sup>223</sup> Lee and Jeong, “The Impact of North Korea’s Artillery Strike on Public Opinion in South Korea,” 11.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

programs in a complete and a verifiable manner; and (5) combining efforts over a range of critical global issues.<sup>225</sup>

After the Bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island, Washington's strong commitment toward Seoul was sustained, and it promised its support by declaring that the U.S. "would stand by the ROK no matter what happened." Also, as tensions escalated, the U.S.–ROK cooperation reached its peak as an alliance relationship.

*c. The PRC Response*

Despite the strengthened U.S.–ROK alliance and tough stance toward Pyongyang, the countermeasures toward the provocation did not seem to have a significant effect on Pyongyang's hostile attitude, because of Beijing's counter-responses and assistance to its ally. Beijing's first official comments after the sinking of the Cheonan were condolences for the "tragedy" and stated that Beijing had taken "note that the ROK plans to carry out a scientific and objective investigation and believes the issue will be properly handled."<sup>226</sup> However, even though Premier Wen Jiabao pledged that Beijing "will not protect anyone" who was responsible for the sinking during his visit to Seoul (5. 28–5.31)<sup>227</sup>, it became increasingly clear that Beijing would not suspend protection of its ally. While sustaining its vague attitude and avoiding the issue of culpability of the North, Beijing called for Seoul and Washington to "stay calm" and "exercise restraint." Even after the investigation results were announced, Beijing refused to ascribe any blame to Pyongyang. Instead, President Hu Jintao welcomed Kim Jong-Il's visit to Beijing only a few days after the Beijing-Seoul summit meeting in May 2010. Also, the PRC criticized the UNSC resolution supported by the U.S. and ROK, and insisted that it might destabilize or provoke Pyongyang. Also, as Washington's growing military involvement in the region and strengthening the U.S.–ROK alliance, Beijing obliquely criticized Joint military exercises as "stirring up tensions."

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<sup>225</sup> Ikenberry, *The Political Foundation of American Relations with East Asia*, 33–34

<sup>226</sup> "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Jiang Yu's Regular Press Conference on April 20, 2010," last modified April 21, 2010, <http://al.china-embassy.org/eng/fyrth/t684079.htm>.

<sup>227</sup> Sung-ki Jung, "China will not protect those behind ship sinking: Wen," *CNN*, May 28, 2010, accessed November 25, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/05/116\\_66691.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/05/116_66691.html).

Beijing's attitude remained similar in the incident of the "Bombardment of the Yeonpyeong Island." Although officials adopted a tone of increasing concern, some Chinese analysts emphasized that South Korean military exercises had provoked the North, and its media described the incident as "the Koreas firing at each other." Moreover, Beijing criticized U.S. military deployment and exercises with allies, particularly the Joint U.S.-ROK military exercises in the Yellow Sea, involving an aircraft carrier, as a threat at its "front door." In the confrontation with the surged tensions on the peninsula and international pressure, Beijing called for an "emergency meeting of delegates to the Six-Party Talks" on November 28, 2010, even though the conditions for resumption of the talks were still not met. From Beijing's calculation, within the framework of the Six-Party Talks, it can "mitigate international pressure for additional action by China and continue to play a central role in the response toward the DPRK," while easing the tension on the peninsula through diplomatic means.

*d. The End of the Incident*

The consequence of the both incidents was concluded by the two great powers' decision for the agreement to restrain the two Koreas. As the tension was continuously escalating without concession between the two Koreas, and as the likelihood of the war was increasing, the strategic priority and interest of Washington and Beijing—avoiding the destabilization of the region and the entrapment in the inter-Korean conflict—were met. While agreeing on the need for appeasement between the two Koreas, as a precursor to resuming stability, the U.S. and PRC made respective efforts to keep the two Koreas from colliding. Beijing dispatched State Councilor Dai Bingguo to Seoul on November 27 and 28, and Pyongyang on December 8 and 9 to call for restraint and dialogue. The U.S. participated in the ROK live-fire drill exercise as an observer on December 20 in order to deter Pyongyang from retaliating. After several months of protracted negotiation, the U.S. and PRC signed a joint statement on January 19, for the inter-Korean dialogue and North Korean Uranium program, and Seoul and Pyongyang agreed to hold high-level military talks on January 20.

However, although the four players appeared to restrain their conflicts, in macro aspect, basically, nothing has been changed for inter-Korean conflict, North Korean WMD, or the U.S.–China rivalry. Seoul could not receive an official apology from Pyongyang, even after the highly strengthened U.S.–ROK alliance. Also, counterbalancing between the U.S. and PRC was still working while in the process of problem solving (i.e., two days before Secretary Robert Gates visited China, Beijing executed the first test of its own J-20 stealth fighter on January 10, 2011). Rather, the regional security structure was more strained with the consolidation of the two sets of rivalries and alliances. Moreover and most importantly, Pyongyang received no significant punishment from international or bilateral level for its provocations. It still has nuclear weapons program, and its conventional military threat is high. The failure to produce a unified response may encourage further provocations whenever the tensions meet the risks for its calculation.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

For the protracted tensions and conflicts between the two Koreas, this chapter draws out two important implications: interconnectedness and antagonistic dependence. The U.S., PRC, ROK, and DPRK relations are closely interconnected with the security relational linkages—alliance and rivalry. Because of the dense interconnectedness between the four players, any significant strategic movement and its consequence easily spread out throughout the system. Especially, security disruptions drive them under the negative influence and confrontations.

Within this security-sensitive interconnectedness, those players seem to work in the vicious cycle of confrontation, which reproduces tensions and conflicts over time. The first element of the negativity protracted in the cycle is the undesired result produced while those four states are playing the “adversary–alliance game” for deterrence or conciliation. Owing to the interconnectedness, the security policy targeted at one specific goal produces unwanted consequence in non-targeted actors. The other imperative element is antagonistic dependence. In many cases, those four players have their respective security priorities and interests toward each other. This asymmetry often generates inconsistency and friction between allies in executing a security policy. To

some extent, it produces a paradoxical dependence on the tensions and conflictual relations, while securing respective security interest.

As shown in the cases of “ROKS Cheonan” and “Bombardment of Yeonpyeong,” the dense interconnectedness, along with contradictive security relations and antagonistic dependence, force the four players into the dilemmatic situation and push the vicious cycle of confrontation. In this vicious cycle, neither—conflicts nor conciliation—generate significant status quo changes in the four player’s security configuration.

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## **VI. CONCLUSION**

### **A. THE CONTINUITY OF THE DIVISION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

This paper thoroughly explored the problems of the ongoing division of the Korean Peninsula. It identifies factors contributing to the continuity of the division, from the intricately entangled security relations between the U.S., PRC, ROK and DPRK: rivalry and alliance. While struggling for security, the four players become either a security provider or a threat to the other players. As the most basic foundation for the inter-Korean relations, South and North Korea have maintained animosity and suspicion toward each other while seeking sole legitimacy in the reunified Korean Peninsula. Their spiraling security competition allowed the external powers intervening in Korean security affairs deeply so that inter-Korean relations cannot be separated from the external powers' influence and relations, especially the U.S.–China rivalry. In the context of the ongoing rivalry between the ROK and DPRK, and the deepening rivalry between the U.S. and PRC, the four players have sought security ties from their respective alliances, and the two sets of alliances have formed to counter rivalries as strong as the degree of threat perception that the adversary induces.

#### **1. Prisoner's Dilemma and Alliance Security Dilemma**

Each relational linkage provides an imperative security framework to the four players, but the two sets of rivalries and alliances have complicated implications for the inter-Korean relations because of their divergent security interests and priorities on the peninsula, from ally and rival, which have been widely differed since the end of the Cold War. These differences have produced paradoxical security implications—"two dilemmas"—for the inter-Korean reconciliation: Prisoners' Dilemma in rivalries and Alliance Security Dilemma for allies. These became the main impediments obscuring the movement of the other player's strategy for changing the status quo, neither peacefully nor aggressively. Thus, any change of the continuity of the division is complicated by security problems that cannot easily be solved as long as it does not address the two security dilemmas.

In the relations of two sets of rivalries—the U.S.–PRC and the ROK–DPRK, the Prisoner’s Dilemma explains how the rational player’s interest-seeking behavior produces deadlock, although reconciliation provides better results. Currently, the four players seem to satisfy the status quo of “absence of major conflict” on the Korean Peninsula. However, for the four players, the most optimal outcome for the Korean Peninsula will be the denuclearization, the zero-possibility of full-scale military conflict and the absence of North Korean provocations disturbing economic stability in the region. In this respect, the fundamental solution is the reconciliation process that provides a politically stable, economically prosperous, united Korea. However, between rivalries who still have lingering doubts, distrust, and uncertainty toward their respective counterpart, those players tend to choose “defection,” which has less benefit than “cooperation” for the inter-Korean reconciliation, because “cooperation” involves in high risk to victimize its security with an adversary’s defection.

Also, in the relations of two sets of alliances—the U.S.–ROK and the PRC–DPRK, the alliance security dilemma explains the divergent interest and threat perception between allies work against a reconciliation policy. Because the four players have priorities and interests that are different from those of its partner, it produces the asymmetric abandonment and entrapment fears, and makes the alliance difficult to have a consistent voice on any ally’s divergent security interests. Especially, the U.S. and ROK showed greatly different security policy directions, under the Kim and Roh administrations and Bush administration, towards the North Korean nuclear program and the Sunshine Policy. As a result of the divergent approaches, neither government acquired explicit achievement in their respective policies. Also, for the PRC–DPRK alliance, the asymmetric abandonment and entrapment fear prevents either state from forming progressive or violent policies. Such inconsistent political voices between allies work as the great conflict, preventing the status quo—the continuity of the division—from changing.

## 2. The Paradoxical Equilibrium and the Vicious Cycle of Confrontation

Moreover, the interaction of rivalry and alliance among the four players produces paradoxical security equilibrium, which tends to return to the stabilized balance of power. The two security linkages tightly interconnect with each other, so that four players take part in two different levels of balance of power games: the regional level and inter-Korean level. Also, because of the interconnectedness of the two security relations, they should play the adversary and alliance game at the same time they choose a security strategy. Under this heavy influence of other players' strategic movements, any attempts to bring disadvantageous changes to other powers will meet with significant resistance or friction from either rivalry or ally.

Also, the four players are under the environment that provides an attractive antagonistic dependence, enabling each to seek benefits from conflictual relations, tension and mutual hostility. However, it is one of the major forces turning the vicious cycle of confrontation that protracts conflicts and tensions. Thus, negative security incidents tend to happen more often, and when it happens, it generates the expanded reproduction from other players and strains the security structure. In other words, a player who is seeking conciliation should overcome significant pressure and antagonistic motivation from friends and foes.

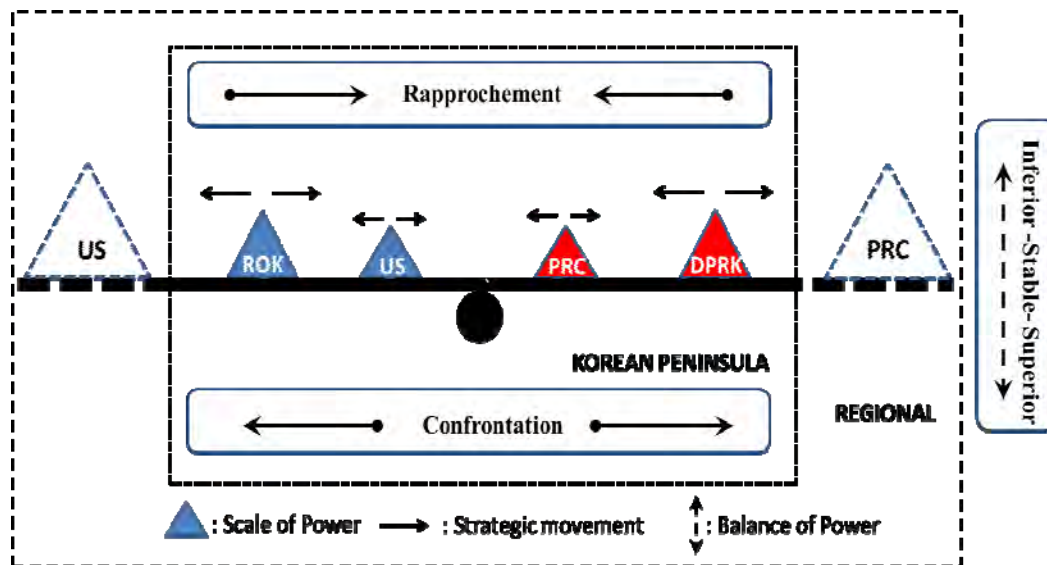


Figure 15. The Equilibrium Structure in the Korean Peninsula

Figure 15 shows the delicate security equilibrium in the two sets of alliances and rivalries and the difficulty to break the status quo on the peninsula. In this paradoxical equilibrium, the more both Koreas move away from the alliance, the more both Koreas have security concerns. The more both Koreas have divergent interest with respect to their patron, the more counterparts have an opportunity to exploit that situation. Also, the more both Koreas align with the patron's interest, the more the continuity of the division is probable. On the other hand, the more the U.S. and PRC permit the rapprochement between the South and North, the more both super powers would have uncertainty in their respective status in the region. In this security environment, any of autonomous attempts to change the status quo make it very difficult to achieve its desired security objective. Examples include the U.S.'s efforts to eliminate North Korean nuclear program, the ROK's Sunshine policy, the PRC's pursuit of a multilateral framework, and the DPRK's efforts' for the regime survival. In short, unless such paradoxical security structure is dissolved, it would be improbable to realize the inter-Korean rapprochement.

## **B. SOUTH KOREAN POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INTER-KOREAN RECONCILIATION**

### **1. Problem of South Korean Reconciliation Policy: Sunshine and Hardline**

These consecutive logical arguments lead to the several implications for problems and solutions for the inter-Korean reconciliation. First, although the inter-Korean reconciliation is a Korean ethic issue, the autonomous conciliatory policy will meet significant resistance from other players. It raises the abandonment fear of the U.S. and PRC (from Pyongyang), and the Prisoner's Dilemma with the DPRK. As seen at the Sunshine Policy of the former progressive ROK governments, their autonomous engagement policy faced huge pressures from domestic and international, and North Korean WMD provocations deteriorated the relations between the U.S. and PRC, and activated the vicious cycles of confrontations regardless of the ROK's conciliatory efforts. Without essential leverage and measures to the North, the South's autonomous efforts failed to bring significant changes from Pyongyang. Also, due to North Korea's continuous provocations, the Sunshine Policy eventually lost its momentum and public

support, whereas the conservative party acquired initiative in the elections and the hardline policy toward North Korea.

Second, the hardline approach toward North Korea will also prevent changes from the current status quo and strains all four player's relations. It basically raises the entrapment fear of the U.S. and PRC for the increased inter-Korean conflicts, and inflicts security dilemmas onto North Korea. Although Seoul would receive enhanced deterrence capability from Washington with the strengthened U.S.-ROK alliance, it will have limited effectiveness because it would soon be counterbalanced by the PRC's increased support toward the DPRK. Also, it will generate more motivation for turning the vicious cycle of confrontation, in which all players would gain their respective security interest but further reduce the possibility of reconciliation. As seen in the Lee administration's security hardline policy, it merely reproduced animosity and conflict between the two Koreas and achieved nothing for the inter-Korean relations.

Third, there is a more compromised policy recommendation, which was referred to as the South Korean grand strategy. First of all, it suggests that South Korea should maintain strong security ties with the United States while expanding economic cooperation with China. Then Seoul should seek reconciliation with North Korea while establishing resolute readiness against North Korean provocation.<sup>228</sup> It sounds like a more plausible solution than the previous two policies due to its seemingly strategic flexibility. However, even though the strategy may maximize national interests practically, by placing itself between the U.S. and PRC, and receiving reflective benefits derived from the rivalry, it fundamentally cannot overcome paradoxical security dilemmas discussed in this thesis. This is because it will bolster the U.S.-PRC security dilemma, thus the PRC will never abandon the North Korean strategic value. Also, it will stimulate the U.S.'s abandonment fear when the South carries out any conciliatory movement toward the PRC and DPRK, so that the ROK will face lingering pressure. Furthermore, it will never reduce North Korean concern for its survival and prevent its defection from the cooperation.

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<sup>228</sup> Jaeho Hwang, "China's Future Rise and South Korea's Security Implications," *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 21, no.2 (Fall/Winter 2007): 89-115.

## **2. Possible Policy Implications for the Inter-Korean Reconciliation**

All things considered, the inter-Korean reconciliation should be more focused on the process of relieving structural barriers rather than policy contents—not merely choosing the Sunshine or the Hardline policy. Under the current regional security structure, there are only two possibilities for changes of the division of the Korean Peninsula in macro terms: breaking the balance of power or acquiring agreement from all four players. In reality, the first option can be excluded due to its dangerousness and Seoul's lack of capability to carry out. Then, it should take the second option that finds the possibility of consensus from all parties. In order to draw out consensus from all players, Seoul should address the concerns of the other players including its own people, and should solve the following fundamental dilemmas: the antagonistic dependence, the alliance and adversary game, and the Prisoners' Dilemma. This paper suggests a phase-in solution. South Korea should take a step-by-step approach to escape from the dilemmas and antagonistic dependence.

Perhaps the first and foremost step for the ROK for the reconciliation begins with establishing a political basement in domestic politics. Thus, Seoul should decide whether it really wants reconciliation, or not, and should draw out social consultation for the reconciliation in order to prevent the division of public opinion in domestic politics and maintain consistency in its policy. South Korea should keep in mind that the continuity of problems begins from the fact that nobody wants to accept any loss of interest, thus it should have confidence, enabling it to run the risk the failure and the loss of security interests in order to change the status quo. Because dealing with the Kim Jung-Il regime is painful and tricky, South Korea will need tremendous patience, not only from the decision makers but also from the public. Also, it should establish legitimacy with a national consensus to get rid of groups of people who gain reflective benefits from North Korean provocation. Only with a strong will and united voice can South Korea execute a consistent conciliate policy.

The second step is that of publicizing the vision and the specific plan of reconciliation and making it become a *fait accompli* by building consensus with the two great powers. First, South Korea should consult and build consensus with its most

important ally, the U.S., for the inter-Korean reconciliation in order not to provoke the abandonment fear and to eliminate uncertainty and suspicion. Without the consent of the U.S. regarding the method and status of the USFK, South Korea will soon confront security pressure from the North and divided domestic public opinion, losing confidence for the security. Based upon agreement from the U.S., South Korea should proceed to consult with China to relieve its abandonment fear, uncertainty, and suspicion about the inter-Korean reconciliation. At the very least, three states should reach the same basis for the reconciliation or should have a framework to discuss it positively and continuously. In this process of consensus building, South Korea should retain firm, resolute and confident attitudes for executing reconciliation, because the two great power's aspirations for the reconciliation is not as high as South Korea's. If not, they will soon lose faith and defect toward their respective interests. Fundamentally, because the U.S. and PRC have no interest in the inter-Korean reconciliation itself, but in the impact of it to their respective security status, South Korea should proactively mediate both states' strategic calculation and interest tied to the inter-Korean reconciliation.

The third step is that South Korea should establish a framework enabling it to get rid of the Prisoners' Dilemma between the South and North. If Seoul successfully achieves the second step—whether bilaterally or multilaterally establishing consensus—Pyongyang would lose its strategic motivation for provocation, significantly because it will not produce strategic values due to the absence of a chain reaction among other players. Even in a case where there are North Korean provocations to deviate South Korean peace pressure, South Korea should maintain the consistent political attitude and coordinate with the U.S. and the PRC to deal with provocations. Also, when the South consistently executes its reconciliation policy to relieve Pyongyang's concern for survival and expanding cooperation, the North would lose its significant temptation for defection. After relieving security concerns of the North derived from the South, it will be possible to talk about denuclearization because the fundamental reason for of the WMD program is based on the inter-Korean rivalry. Theoretically, this process is possible either in a bilateral or multilateral approach, but from this stage, discussing sensitive issues—the WMD, guarantee of regime survival and the inter-Korean reconciliation—within the

multilateral framework will be more effective in producing further confidence and cooperation while cooperating with the U.S. and PRC. Furthermore, it should find a practical mechanism to calm security fears of North Korea without reducing its military readiness, punish its defection and provocation, and communicate with each other. If possible, the four players should take part in establishing the framework or measure that will benefit all parties and the stakeholder. For example, if the four players participate in the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) program and expand economic cooperation significantly, all four players will be sharing business benefits and an economic buffer-zone while also taking the stakeholder for the inter-Korean moderate level of conflict.

Achieving the inter-Korean reconciliation is a significantly difficult process that involves diverse security problems, contradictory result from the security policy, and overcoming lingering doubts, suspicion and uncertainty, not only in South and North Korea. Without relieving such paradoxical structures and the vicious cycle of the confrontation, the efforts to end the continuity of the division of the Korean Peninsula would last forever, as long as the current contributing factors exist. Therefore, South Korea should begin with changes in its perception, building consensus toward the division and recognizing the paradoxical structure and the vicious cycle. Then, it needs to gather consensus from external powers by setting the inter-Korean reconciliation as the major agenda, and mediate the complicated interests related to the Korean Peninsula. Only after that will the South be able to approach the North.



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